

# GRADUATE HANDBOOK



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**2011 -2012**

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# I. INTRODUCTION AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Welcome to the Graduate Program in Geography at Michigan State University! This document is an important source of information that will answer many of your questions about our graduate programs. This handbook is intended to serve Geography graduate students and faculty as a guide to the basic policies and procedures of the graduate programs so that they will have a working knowledge of their opportunities, obligations, and responsibilities.

The graduate program in the Department of Geography at MSU offers M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Geography, and a M.S. degree in Geographic Information Science (GISci). The M.S. degree in Geography is a 'Plan A' or thesis degree and involves independent research. Students interested in continuing their studies toward the doctorate should pursue this degree. The Ph.D. degree is a research-intensive doctorate aimed primarily at students seeking careers in academia. The M.S. in GISci degree is a 'Plan B' or non-thesis professional degree and is a terminal degree. The majority of M.S. GISci students are practitioners who are interested in furthering their knowledge of GISci.

Within the field of Geography, graduate students are able to devise a program of study that fits their particular areas of interest; we encourage students to take coursework outside of GEO. However, our academic strengths, and hence most of our students are in the following academic areas:

- \* physical geography, especially climatology, geomorphology, biogeography and soils;
- \* economic/urban geography and regional science;
- \* geospatial technologies (GISci, remote sensing and cartography); and
- \* nature-society studies.

Because Geography is such a broad and interdisciplinary field, the Department maintains close ties with many other units at MSU, including area and thematic studies centers such as the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS), African Studies Center (ASC), Asian Studies Center (ASN), the Center for Gender in Global Context (GenCen), and the Center for Advanced Studies in International Development (CASID). Some of our faculty have joint appointments with academic units such as Agriculture, Recreation, and Resource Studies (CARRS), Anthropology, Forestry, the Center for Global Change and Earth Observation (CGCEO), the Global Urban Studies Program (GUSP), the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station (MAES), and Environmental Science and Policy Program (ESPP).

## Goals and objectives of the graduate program

The graduate programs in Geography at Michigan State University are designed to develop the student's ability to conduct original research and/or to provide practical experience in a technical field and to provide a thorough, in-depth learning experience. As such, the programs foster:

- understanding of scientific inquiry;
- knowledge of the discipline of Geography, its history, issues, methods and trends;
- depth of knowledge in an area of specialization, including an understanding of important research questions;
- proficiency in appropriate analytical and technical skills;
- skills in communicating the results of research and experience.

Our programs are individualized to allow the student, working with their Guidance Committee, to shape a program of study that is broad in scope yet consistent with specific student interests.

If, after reviewing this handbook, you have any concerns or questions, please contact us at the addresses on the front cover or visit our website <http://www.geo.msu.edu/> where you can also view our departmental vision, faculty, curriculum, and facilities.



## II: APPLICATION PROCEDURES

To apply to any of the graduate programs in Geography you will need to fill in the 'major code' on your application form.

MS in Geography (with thesis) major code: 7669

MS-GIS major code: 4742

Ph.D. major code: 4347

*Note:* You must have a Master's Degree **with a thesis** to be admitted to the Ph.D. program

### Instructions for the MSU Geography Graduate Application:

For full consideration for a fall admission and departmental funding,  
please have all material to us by **December 31**

There are two parts to your graduate application – the university part and the department part.

#### **Part I: Application to Michigan State University – university part:**

**The official University application form:** A completed *Application for Admission to Graduate Study*. Online application and credit card fee payment is preferred and most efficient way to apply. Access the application form at: <http://grad.msu.edu/apply.htm> If you do not have a credit card, you may download the application form, fill it in and then mail it to the **Department of Geography** with a check made out to "Michigan State University" for \$50.00 US.

#### **Part II: Application to the Department of Geography – department part:**

*Send these materials directly to the Department of Geography as part of your application packet.*

**Statement of Purpose:** A neatly typed and concisely written (maximum 1,000 words) statement of purpose. This statement needs to include a discussion of why you want to pursue a degree in geography or GIS, your area of interest within Geography, your background to do so, and your career goals and aspirations. It is a **critical** part of the application packet, as it provides an indication of the applicant's academic focus, writing ability, and future direction.

**Graduate Record Examination (GRE):** Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores from a GRE taken within the *last five years* (older results will **not** be accepted) are required. Only under *highly unusual* circumstances may a waiver of the GRE score requirements be granted. Requests for a waiver should be made in writing to the Graduate Coordinator, Department of Geography.  
(Note: for the GRE we are institution 1465 and department 2203.)

**Transcripts:** Two copies of an official transcript of all academic work.

**Background Information Form:** A completed '*Background Information Form*.'

**Letters of Recommendation:** A minimum of three (3) letters of recommendation, each of which **must** include the Department of Geography's '*Personal Reference Form*.'

**Master's Degree Information Form:** *For Ph.D. Applicants Only.* A '*Master's Degree Information Form*' completed by the student's Master's Department Chair or chair of your advising committee.



**TOEFL Scores:** *For International Students only:* A current TOEFL score (Test of English as a Foreign Language) for all international students whose native language is not English. To be acceptable, the TOEFL test must have been taken within the last 2 years. Submission of the TOEFL scores is a University requirement. The Geography Department generally does not admit students whose TOEFL scores are less than 600 paper based, 100 for internet based score and 250 for computer based score. Funding is unlikely for persons with scores below 630 (paper), 109 (internet), or 267 (computer). If you have a degree from an English-speaking country and your work was primarily in English OR if you have a U.S. undergraduate degree, you can request a TOEFL waiver.

(For the TOEFL we are institution 1465 and department 70.)

The applicant is also encouraged to submit in the application packet other information that may be pertinent to the admission decision, such a C.V., publications, or other written products.

## ADMISSION GUIDELINES

The Department's decision to admit or not admit an applicant into one of its programs is based upon an evaluation of the complete application packet, which includes: all transcripts and grades, GRE scores, TOEFL (when relevant), letters of recommendation, the Background Information Form, the Statement of Purpose, and other pertinent information such as awards, professional experience, related achievements, and area of interest.

Successful entrants into our master's programs normally have:

- an undergraduate degree in Geography or related field;
- a cumulative undergraduate grade point average (GPA) above 3.4 on a 4.0 scale;
- a total of 1000+ for the combined verbal and quantitative scores of the GRE, and a ranking on the analytical writing part of the GRE that is in the 50<sup>th</sup> or higher percentile;
- a TOEFL score of at least 600 (paper; 630 for funding), 100 (internet; 109 for funding), or 250 (computer; 267 for funding) where applicable;
- a SPEAK score if applying *from China*. Each winter the SPEAK test is given in China by the MSU English Language Center. Applicants from China who are interested in funding are encouraged to sign up for this English exam. Please contact Ms. Ruggles (ruggles@msu.edu).

Successful entrants into our Ph.D. program normally have:

- a thesis MA or MS in Geography or a related discipline
- a grade point average (GPA) above 3.6 on a 4.0 scale in a recognized Master's program;
- a total of 1100+ for the combined verbal and quantitative scores of the GRE; and a ranking on the analytical writing part of the GRE that is in the 75<sup>th</sup> or higher percentile;
- a TOEFL score of at least 600 (paper; 630 for funding), 100 (internet; 109 for funding), or 250 (computer; 267 for funding) where applicable;
- a SPEAK score if applying *from China*. Each winter the SPEAK test is given in China by the MSU English Language Center. Applicants from China who are interested in funding are encouraged to sign up for this English exam. Please contact Ms. Ruggles (ruggles@msu.edu).

**Application evaluation process:** Application packets are reviewed by relevant faculty in the student's declared area of interest, the Graduate Program Coordinator, and the Admissions Committee. The Admission Committee meets once per semester (February for Fall admissions, and, if necessary, October for Spring admissions) to evaluate ALL applications at once. Review for funding is a **SEPARATE** process, and includes an evaluation by the Department Awards Committee during February or March. Review for funding occurs only once per year. Only applications that are complete by **December 31** will be given full consideration for funding in the fall of the academic year. Aid is sometimes available, though very rarely, for students who choose a January admission.

# Straight-to-PhD Option in Geography at MSU

## STUDENT APPLICATION

### *Student Requirements*

Students interested in a “straight-to-PhD” option must meet the following criteria during the application phase:

- 1) Bachelor’s degree in Geography or related field.
- 2) At least a 3.5 GPA (or equivalent) and  $\geq$  1150 GRE. (4 out of 6 on written)
- 3) Evidence of research activity, preferably submission of a lead authored refereed journal article. Other evidence of research activity, such as junior authorship on a journal article, poster presentation, Honor’s awards, or other scholarship may be accepted.
- Somewhat lower GPA and GRE requirements may be acceptable if evidence of evidence of exemplary scholarship exists, such as first or sole-authored publication, or in-hand external/internal (competitive) funding.

### *Application Protocol*

- 1) The Straight-to-PhD option (box) must be selected.
- 2) Student references from an academic background must indicate that applicant is capable of completing a Straight-to-PhD option.
- 3) Student must provide a clear geographical research statement, including identification of a potential advisor at MSU Geo. This document is separate from the standard statement of purpose. We strongly encourage applicants to personally contact relevant faculty.
- 4) The application is reviewed internally according to standard procedures currently in place.
- 5) A decision is rendered by the Admissions Committee, which includes the following options:
  - a) Do not admit
  - b) Admit to MS program
  - c) Applicant is conditionally approved pending an interview.
- 6) The applicant must interview with the Graduate Advisor and potential Research Advisor. Although this interview can be conducted by phone, a campus visit is encouraged.

- 7) After interviews, the Graduate Advisor and Research Advisor meet to render final decision to either admit to MS program or PhD program.

## **PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

This discussion applies only to those undergraduate students who have been admitted straight to the PhD program at MSU Geography. It is intended to provide the framework for a rigorous review of such students and their progress.

- 1) An undergraduate student admitted with normal funding straight to the PhD program will automatically receive 2 years of guaranteed funding, with an option for an additional 3 years of funding provided suitable progress is made toward the degree.
- 2) The student will be required to develop a good working relationship with the PhD advisor in the first year.
- 3) The student will be required to take Research Design (886) in the first year and develop the foundation for a research proposal.
- 4) The student must maintain an acceptable grade point average for a Ph.D.
- 5) The student must construct a 10-pg pre-proposal and defend it at a Departmental colloquium by the end of the 1st year.
- 6) At the end of the first year, the Graduate Committee reviews student progress, with input from Major Advisor.
- 7) Graduate Committee decides one of following outcomes:
  - a) Continue on track for Ph.D. with guaranteed funding.
  - b) Move to MS level with 1 more year of guaranteed funding.



## PLANNING A VISIT

Though by no means a requirement, many students find it helpful to plan a visit to the Department of Geography and Michigan State University either before they apply for admission, while their file is under consideration, or after they have been admitted to one of our graduate programs. A visit offers a unique opportunity to become more familiar with the University, Department, faculty, and current graduate students.

If you would like to arrange a visit, the Department can assist. Please contact Ms. Sharon Ruggles, the Graduate Secretary, via telephone (517-355-4650) or email ([ruggles@msu.edu](mailto:ruggles@msu.edu)) to help you plan your visit. Please note that faculty have busy and complicated schedules and travel frequently, therefore some may not be available for meetings during your visit, especially if you plan your visit on short notice and without consultation with the Graduate Secretary.

A typical visit to the Department of Geography includes one-on-one meetings with faculty, a group lunch with current graduate students, and meetings with the Department Chair and the Graduate Coordinator. The Department of Geography is happy to arrange visits with other departments on campus or visits to area and thematic studies units should you be interested.

### III PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

#### GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL DEGREE PROGRAMS

For all degree programs it is strongly suggested that students map out their coursework and requirements early as many crucial courses are taught only one semester per year; others may have prerequisites.

##### **Guidance Committees:**

Initiation and successful completion of independent research, technical competency, and/or creative activity requires early and continued advice and oversight and mentoring by a faculty Advisor on behalf of the academic unit. The Department of Geography is committed to the policy that graduate students have a right to the best advice regarding program planning, research, selection of courses and faculty, and general degree requirements, with the understanding that students are responsible for consulting their Advisors before making program decisions.

The specific **responsibilities** of the thesis/dissertation Advisor include:

- \* advising students on preparing for and selection of a thesis or dissertation topic with realistic prospects for success within an appropriate time frame;
- \* providing training and oversight regarding the conduct of research, theoretical and technical aspects of the student's research, and professional integrity;
- \* providing regular feedback on student progress, including providing constructive criticism if the student's progress does not meet expectations; and
- \* helping students develop into successful professionals and colleagues.

Students should seek out not only their major Advisor for advice, guidance and mentoring, but should regularly consult with their guidance committee and others from the faculty for help, as needed. Geography faculty are willing to provide as much mentoring as graduate students need; students are viewed as young professionals and junior colleagues. Working together with faculty in a mentoring situation can be highly beneficial and is encouraged.

Guidance committees are expected to share responsibility for reviewing the graduate student's progress and guiding the student toward completion of course and program requirements. Therefore, the Geography Department has developed policies to ensure that the Guidance Committee of each graduate student will be formed in a timely fashion and that its composition will ensure proper guidance of the graduate student and maintenance of high professional standards in the graduate student's studies and research or creative activity.

##### **GEOcamp:**

*GEOcamp* is a required residential fieldcamp for all incoming graduate students held for about 3 days in an off-campus location in Michigan prior to the start of the fall semester. It serves as part of the departmental orientation, a way for graduates to get to know each other, and to help new students begin to think as geographers.

##### **Meet the Faculty Course:**

*Meet the Faculty* is a no-credit course that is required for all new graduate students. The class meets once per week (typically on Fridays) for 50 minutes for most of the fall semester and is designed to orient the students to our entire faculty. We have a very large faculty and it is important for new students to be aware of the members of the faculty and what they teach and conduct research on. Students will be asked to attend the weekly meetings, read the assigned publications by faculty, and to participate in the discussions. Evaluation is based on attendance and participation.

**Breadth Requirements:**

Incoming graduate students who do not have a prior degree in geography may be required to take one or more courses to make up 'breadth requirements' in geography. These may be at the 100, 200 or 300 level, and therefore do not count towards degree credit totals. The student may, with the permission of the instructor, take a course at the 400 level (as Geo 490). However, the student may do this with only *one* course (3 or 4) credits. Whether or which deficiencies are 'bumped up' is at the discretion of the student, their Advisor, and the instructor of the course. It is recommended to be a course in the student's area of focus. This is not a requirement; merely a way to do upper level work in a course which is a breadth requirement and thus making it count towards their degree credit totals. What extra work is required of the student is up to the instructor teaching the course.

**Course Waivers for Breadth Requirements:**

Student requesting course waivers must compile suitable documentation concerning the course proposed as a substitute for the course to be waived. Suitable documentation should include but is not limited to: course syllabi, examinations, term papers, bibliographies, textbooks, reading lists, and lecture notes. A lack of suitable documentation may be grounds for refusal to grant the waiver.

Students should request a course waiver, with the appropriate documentation, to the Graduate Program Coordinator. The GPC will consult with appropriate faculty members and the Department Chair regarding the approval or denial of waiver. The decision regarding a waiver will be relayed to the student and Graduate Secretary, and recorded in the student's file.

**Tool Courses for the M.S. in Geography and Ph.D. in Geography Programs:**

A *partial list* of acceptable tool course appears below. See specific programs for more detailed requirements:

Tool Area	Recommended Courses
Cartography	GEO 423, 426
GIS	GEO 325, 425, 428, 825, 826
Remote Sensing	GEO 324, 424, 494, 824, 827
Foreign Language	Second year equivalency, e.g., FRN 202 or 400, GRM 202 or 400
Quantitative Methods	MTH 132, 133, 234, 235, 314, 414, STT 421, 422, 441, 442, 461, GEO 865, 866, 868, 869
Qualitative Methods	RD 812, ANP 429, ANP/GEO/FOR/SOC/FW 859
Programming	CSE 131, 230, 320

Generally, the non-language tool course must *advance the level of competency*, via coursework, while in the MSU program. Research techniques used to satisfy the tool requirement must be in the fields of cartography, GIS, remote sensing, computer science, statistics, mathematics, or social or physical science research methods. Coursework in combinations of these areas is permitted. Tool courses taken to satisfy the breadth requirement may *not* also be used to fulfill the tool course requirement.

Acceptance of **foreign language** as a tool requires the student to pass a competency examination. Approval of the language courses and the level of proficiency is determined by the student's Guidance Committee; the Committee may confer with a faculty member in the department offering the courses for guidance on the issue of language competency. Language competency refers to fluency adequate for the task for fieldwork or archival research in the chosen language.



## REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTERS OF SCIENCE (M.S.) IN GEOGRAPHY DEGREE

The minimum number of credits required beyond the Bachelor's for a Master of Science (M.S.) degree in Geography is **30**, with at least 20 credits in Geography. At least 16 credits must be taken at the 800 and 900 levels, leaving at least 14 elective credits which can be selected from a wide variety of offerings given at the 400 level in Geography and cognate disciplines. *Note: courses below the 400 level may not be counted toward the 30 credit requirement for the M.S. degree but may be used to fulfill tool course requirements (e.g. second year language competency).*

Master's students may count no more than four credits of coursework in 'Independent Study' or 'Research Problems' toward their degree, unless these credits were from classes taught as a regular course. Independent study courses include, but are not limited to GEO 490, 492, 495, 890, and 892. The exception is when these course numbers are used for new courses.

### Specific Requirements for the M.S. degree

**1. If a student does not have a prior degree in Geography they must complete a course in:**

- (1) physical geography
- (2) human geography
- (3) quantitative methods
- (4) geospatial technology (e.g., introductory cartography, GIS, or remote sensing)

These are known as 'breadth requirements.' If these courses were not taken prior to admission to the Master's Program, they must be taken while in the degree program at MSU.

**2. GEO 886 – Research Design in Geography (3 credits)**

This course should be taken at the earliest opportunity.

**3. One Geography seminar (3 credits):**

**4. Two advanced level tool/methods courses (6 to 8 credits):**

One tool must be in the 'spatial technology' area from courses listed below:

GEO 423	Cartographic Design and Production (4)
GEO 424	Advanced Remote Sensing (4)
GEO 425	Geographic Information Science (3)
GEO 426	Thematic Cartography (4)
GEO 428	Digital Terrain Analysis (4)
GEO 802	Geospatial Technologies (3)
GEO 824	Monitoring the Biosphere from Space (4)
GEO 825	Geoprocessing (4)
GEO 826	Geocomputation (3)
GEO 827	Digital Image Processing and Analysis (4)

The second tool course can be taken from those listed above, from courses listed below, or the table on p. 8:

GEO 865           Advanced Quantitative Methods in Geography (4)  
GEO 866           Spatial Data Analysis (4)  
GEO 868           Spatial Regression and Modeling (3)  
GEO 869           Human-Environment Modelling (3)  
An approved qualitative methods course  
An approved second-year or equivalency language course  
An approved programming course

5. **Present a research paper or poster at a professional meeting.**

This presentation can be oral or poster format and must be approved by the Advisor. This requirement must be met prior to the awarding of the degree.

6. **Electives (10-14 credits)**

Elective courses may be taken in or outside the department.

7. **GEO 899 Thesis credits (4-6 credits)**

All M.S. in Geography students must complete a thesis. The student's Advisor and Guidance Committee will supervise the research and writing of the thesis. Thesis credits are included in the 16 credits required at the 800-900 level. An abstract of the thesis not exceeding 150 words must also be prepared as specified in the Graduate School Guide to the Preparation of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations.

Students should contact the MSU Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) before beginning any research that involves human subjects. If you are dealing with human subjects in any way you must gain approval from this program before starting your research. HRPP clearance takes at minimum one month and should be started well in advance of data collection <http://humanresearch.msu.edu/>. Students working with hazardous substances should refer to University policies regarding safety <http://www.orcbs.msu.edu/>.

8. **Pass the final examination**

After completion of departmental requirements above, the candidate will be given a final oral examination. The student must be registered for at least one credit during the semester in which the examination is taken. The examining committee shall consist, at a minimum, of the student's Advisor and Guidance Committee. If the Guidance Committee consists of fewer than three people, one other member of the faculty will be selected by the Department Chairperson to serve as an additional member of the examining committee ('rotator'). The candidate will provide each member of the examining committee with a curriculum vita and a cleanly typed and illustrated copy of the finished thesis at least two weeks prior to the exam.

The Graduate Secretary must be notified at least two weeks prior to the final examination so that required paperwork can be completed.

The final examination will cover the student's declared primary area of study, related theory and methodology, and the thesis research. Successful completion of the examination and approval of the thesis will be determined by a majority vote of the examination committee. Passing the student only on portions of the examination is not permitted. A student who fails the examination may repeat it no sooner than three months from the time of failure and not more than once.



### **M.S. in Geography Guidance Committee:**

The MS's Guidance Committee consists of at least two persons: the Advisor, who chairs the committee, and the person(s) who will be second and third readers of the thesis. The composition of the committee must be approved by the Chair of the Department and reported to the Graduate Program Coordinator and Department Graduate Secretary. Any regular faculty (with a Ph.D. and in the tenure stream) appointed in the Geography Department can serve as a major Advisor for MS in Geography students. At least half of the student's committee members must have Geography as their tenure home. Persons who are Specialists and Administrative Professionals may be included on the Committee but do not count toward the minimum of two members required. They are, in essence, 'extras.' The Guidance Committee must be formed no later than the end of the second semester following entry into the program.



## REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTERS OF SCIENCE in GISci DEGREE (M.S.GISci)

The Master of Science degree is a non-thesis (Plan B) degree that emphasizes applications of analytical techniques in the field of Geography, particularly Geographic information sciences (GISci) and remote sensing, but may include cartography and spatial analysis.

The student must complete a total of 30 credits distributed as follows. At least 16 credits must be taken at the 800 and 900 levels, permitting the student to take as many as 14 credits from a wide variety of offerings given at the undergraduate 400 level in Geography and cognate disciplines. Courses below the 400 level may not be counted toward the 30 credit requirement for the M.S. degree.

Master's students may count no more than four credits of coursework in 'Independent Study' or 'Research Problems' toward their degree, unless these credits were from classes taught as a regular course. Independent study courses include, but are not limited to GEO 490, 492, 495, 890, and 892. The exception is when these course numbers are used for new courses.

All students in the MS in GIS degree are advised by Ellen White ([whitee@msu.edu](mailto:whitee@msu.edu)).

### Specific Requirements for the M.S. in GISci degree:

1. Complete the following courses (9 credits):
  - GEO 425 – Geographic Information Systems (3 credits)  
(or its equivalent, if taken elsewhere)
  - GEO 820 – GIS in Government and Business (3 credits)
  - GEO 821 – GIS Practicum (3 credits)
2. Complete one 400-level (or higher) course in cartography (3-4 credits).
3. Complete one 400-level (or higher) course in quantitative or qualitative methods (3-4 credits).
4. Complete one of the following (3-4 credits):
  - GEO 825 – Geoprocessing
  - GEO 826 – Geocomputation
  - GEO 827 – Digital Image Processing and Analysis
5. Electives – these must be approved by the Advisor (8-11 credits).
6. Pass the final exit examination.\*

The student must be registered for at least one credit during the term in which the examination is taken. The Graduate Secretary must be notified at least one month prior to the final examination so that required paperwork can be completed.

The exam is split into two parts: a task analysis part and an oral exam. In the first part, a student receives an advanced project-oriented problem that is related to the student's thematic focus. The student has one hour, open-note, to develop an answer. Students do not actually obtain the data or conduct the analysis; instead they explain what they would need and how they would structure the analysis.

The second part is a 90 minute oral exam overseen by a committee of two faculty members. First the student gives a short presentation on their task analysis, and then they are questioned by the committee. Second, the student is asked a set of core questions from GIScience courses in their

program of study. These questions are drawn from a large bank, organized by course. The Question Bank can be found on the ANGEL, in the Geography Graduate Program Information Group.

Students receive questions on core concepts in GIS courses they have taken, both required and elective. Questions are provided to the bank by course instructors.

Successful completion of the examination will be determined by a vote of the examination committee. A student who fails the examination may repeat it no sooner than three months from the time of failure and not more than once.

*A note about course sequencing:*

Several courses that are **required (in bold)** or *elective (in italic)* in the MSGISc degree have suggested prerequisites. Sequencing is as follows:

Geo 221 → Geo 324 → *Geo 424* → *Geo 827*  
 Geo 221 → Geo 325 → **Geo 425** → *Geo 825 or Geo 826*  
 Geo 221 → *Geo 423, or Geo 426, or Geo 428*  
 Geo 802 → **Geo 425** or *Geo 424*

**Typical MSGISc course schedule**

Fall of first year (9-12 credits)	Spring of first year (9-12 credits)
Geo 802 (if needed)	Geo 425
Electives	Electives
Fall of second year (9-12 credits)	Spring of second year (9-12 credits)
Geo 820	Geo 821
Geo 827 (if chosen)	Geo 825 or 826
Electives	Electives
	Exit examination

\*Please note that this is a typical schedule and will vary given student's prior experiences and interests.



## REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOCTOR IN PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D.) DEGREE

In order to be admitted to the Ph.D. a students must have completed a master's thesis.

Ph.D. students who do not have a prior degree in geography (either at the bachelor's or master's level) must have completed a course in (1) physical geography (2) human geography (3) quantitative methods, and (4) geospatial technology (e.g., introductory cartography, GIS, remote sensing). These are known as 'breadth requirements.' If these courses were not been taken previously, they must be taken while in the degree program at MSU.

Ph.D. students in Geography must:

Complete at least **56 credits** in the courses and areas listed below. Courses below the 400 level may not be counted toward the 56 credit requirement for the Ph.D. degree, but may be used to fulfill tool course requirements (see below). Ph.D. students may count no more than six credits of coursework in independent study or research problems toward their degree. Geography courses covered under this requirement include, but are not limited to, GEO 490, 492, 495, 890, and 892. The exception is when these course numbers are used for new courses.

### Specific Requirements for the Ph.D. degree

1. GEO 886 Research Design in Geography (3 credits)
2. GEO 986 Theory and Methods in Geography (3 credits)
3. **Two** Geography seminars (6 credits):
4. **One** advanced level tool course (800 or 900 level) (3-4 credits)
5. Electives (15 credits minimum) as approved by the student's Guidance Committee
6. GEO 999 – Dissertation credits (24 credits)
7. **Pass the comprehensive examination.**

The comprehensive exam tests a student's mastery of geographical subject matter, knowledge of related geographic literature, and an understanding of research theory and methodology. It is recommended that students complete their comprehensive examination by the end of their 6<sup>th</sup> semester in the Ph.D. program. This examination consists of both a written and oral component.

#### Written portion:

The questions for the exam will be formulated by the student's Advisor and Guidance Committee. The length of the written examination will be no fewer than 2 days, and no more than 3 days (8 hours maximum per day).

The written examination must be taken on consecutive days. Questions for each day will be provided **only** on that day and not before. The Guidance Committee will determine the mechanics of the examination, e.g. open or closed book, use of computer with access to the internet, use of a personal vs. a departmental computer. These mechanics will apply to the **entirety** of the written examination and must be clearly communicated to the student via 'Ph.D. Form 3.' This form is to be signed by all members of the committee and turned in to the Graduate Secretary three weeks prior to the examination. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that legible copies of his/her responses to the exam questions are made available to all members of the Guidance Committee. The Department shall be notified of the examination at least at least **one week** before it is taken.

#### Oral portion:

The oral examination, like the written, examination, will broadly examine the student's general knowledge in geography and their field(s) of specialization, together with related theory, methodology, literature, and research. The oral examination, not to exceed 4 hours, is also an opportunity for the student to defend his or her answers to the questions in the written test, and for faculty to examine the student further should some responses to the written



examination need clarification. **Under no circumstances should the oral comprehensive examination focus on the student's dissertation proposal; the proposal defense is a separate examination** (see below). The oral examination will be taken within two academic calendar months of the written exam (August 15-May 15) but cannot occur until the student has advanced to this portion of the exam (see below).

Notice of the oral examination will be given to the Department **at least one week** in advance of the date of the examination. All Geography faculty may attend and participate in the oral examination by notifying the student, their Advisor, and the Guidance Committee. 48 hours in advance of the examination date. Geography graduate students may attend with permission of the student being examined.

#### **Assessment of the Comprehensive Examination:**

After the student completes the *written examination*, their Guidance Committee will decide whether the student should 1) advance, or 2) not advance, to the oral portion of the examination. A decision to advance reflects that the Guidance Committee judges that the student satisfactorily responded to the questions on the examination or that concerns regarding the responses could potentially be addressed during the oral portion of the examination. The student will be considered as having 'advanced to the oral examination' provided that no more than one member of the Guidance Committee votes not to advance. The Guidance Committee will officially notify the student and the Graduate Secretary of their decision **within ten working days** from the date when the written examination answers were given to the Guidance Committee. Decisions to advance the student on portions of the examination are not permitted. Prior to evaluating the student's answers to the written examination, the Guidance Committee will agree as to which members will evaluate which answers. The Advisor will then inform the student of the Guidance Committee's decision regarding the outcome of their written examination. If the answers to the written examination are not considered to be adequate for advancement, the written examination may be repeated but not more than once. Scheduling of the 'retake' of the written examination is left to the Advisor and the Guidance Committee, but should not exceed one year from the date of the original written examination. After the examination, regardless of outcome, a copy of all questions and the student's responses to them will be placed in the student's departmental file. The questions the student was asked will be kept in a file of comprehensive examination questions. This file will be maintained by the Graduate Secretary and may be consulted by Graduate students upon request.

The Guidance Committee will meet immediately after the *oral examination* to determine whether 1) the comprehensive examination has been passed in full, 2) the oral exam has to be retaken, or 3) the entire exam (oral and written) must be retaken. The student will be considered as having 'passed' the Comprehensive Examination provided that no more than one member of the Guidance Committee votes to fail on either portion of the examination. If the student does not perform satisfactorily on the oral portion of the examination, this portion of the examination may be repeated only once. Scheduling of the 'retake' of the oral examination is left to the Advisor and the Guidance Committee, but should not exceed one year from the date of the original oral examination. Under no circumstances should there be a modification of the format of the examination (e.g. a student being asked to write further essays of clarification).

At the completion of the oral examination, Guidance Committee members must sign the Record of Comprehensive Examination Form ('Ph.D. Form 4') indicating pass or fail for the written and the oral portions of the examination.

The comprehensive examination needs to be passed before the student can progress to the Proposal Defense (#10 below).

*Please note:*

- A) *The entire examination needs to be retaken if a student switches Advisor after the comprehensive exam has been taken.*
- B) *The comprehensive examination expires if no further progress is made towards the degree (p. 19).*

8. **Present a research paper or poster (as author and presenter), approved by the Advisor, at a professional meeting, while in residence in Ph.D. program**
9. **Submit, as first author, an authored or co-authored manuscript to a peer reviewed journal, approved by the Advisor, for publication. While in residence in Ph.D. program**
10. **Present and defend a written dissertation proposal before the Department.**

The student must prepare a written dissertation proposal in consultation with the Guidance Committee. The content of the proposal will be orally presented and defended before the Guidance Committee and other interested faculty and graduate students by the end of the student's fifth semester. The primary purpose of the



proposal presentation and defense is to facilitate high-quality dissertation research by providing a forum for student-faculty interaction on this critical part of the student's Ph.D. work. The session gives the student access to evaluation of the research by the committee, other faculty, and students. **At least two weeks** before the presentation, copies of the written proposal must be made available to each member of the committee and to the Graduate Secretary for distribution. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that copies of the proposal are made available by the deadline.

Two hours will be allowed for the presentation and subsequent questioning. An initial uninterrupted presentation of the proposed research should be 20-30 minutes in length. All faculty and students are encouraged to attend this initial presentation. The question session that follows will be moderated by the student's Advisor, and all Guidance Committee members will actively participate. However, all persons attending may ask questions and offer comments. Following the session, the student's Guidance Committee will meet to determine whether the proposal must be revised and presented again. A student may present and defend a proposal only twice.

When approved by the student's committee, the proposal becomes a written understanding that sets forth the committee's expectations and the student's obligations. A dissertation that deviates significantly from the approved proposal may be found unsatisfactory. Students should contact the MSU Human Research Protection program (HRPP) *before* beginning any research that involves human subjects. If you are dealing with human subjects in any way you must gain approval from this committee before starting your research. HRPP clearance takes at minimum one month and should be started well in advance of data collection <http://humanresearch.msu.edu/>. Students working with hazardous substances should refer to University policies regarding safety <http://www.orcbs.msu.edu/>.

#### 11. Complete a dissertation.

All doctoral students must complete a dissertation. This is a written document of research that makes an original contribution to knowledge. The research is performed under the guidance of the student's Advisor and the Guidance Committee and must be acceptable to them. The student, however, is responsible for the quality and design of the research, including any fieldwork, statistical analysis, and graphics. The dissertation must be submitted according to regulations prescribed in the Formatting Guide for Masters Theses and Doctoral Dissertations (available from the Graduate School). An abstract not exceeding 600 words must be included.

#### 12. Pass an oral examination in defense of the dissertation.

Not later than **six weeks** before the end of the last semester and **at least three weeks before** the final oral examination, the student is required to submit the dissertation and abstract to the major professor, members of the Guidance Committee, Graduate Secretary, and the Dean of the College of Social Science. **The Graduate Secretary must be notified at least 3 weeks prior** to the final oral examination so that required paperwork can be completed. The student should, however, check the appropriate MSU Schedule of Courses and Academic Handbook for exact deadlines. The dissertation must be in completed form, typed with complete illustrative material and acceptable to the major professor. At this stage, it should be bound only by spiral, or other loose types of binding.

#### Doctoral Guidance Committees:

The doctoral program Guidance Committee consists of at least four regular Michigan State University faculty. The professor with whom the student works most closely is the Advisor. The additional members of the Guidance Committee are chosen by the student in consultation with their Advisor. Any Ph.D. regular faculty (under the rules of tenure) appointed in the Geography Department can serve as Advisor for Geography Ph.D. students. At least half of the members of a student's guidance committee must have Geography as their tenure home. Persons who are Specialists and Administrative Professionals may be included on the Committee but do not count toward the minimum of four (or more) members required. They are, in essence, 'extras.' The composition of the committee must be approved by the Chairperson of the Department and reported to the Graduate Program Coordinator and Graduate Secretary and the Dean of the College of Social Science. An Advisor and the Guidance Committee should be formed no later than the end of the second semester following entry into the program.

The University requires that a 'Dean's Representative,' a regular MSU faculty member who is *not* a member of the Geography Department, be a voting member of the committee and be present at the oral defense of the dissertation. It is

suggested that this requirement be handled by asking someone from *outside the department* to serve on the Guidance Committee. If a non-Geography faculty member is not on the Guidance Committee it is the student's responsibility to find a non-Geography faculty member to submit to the Dean's office as proposed Dean's Representative. At least three weeks notice is required by the Dean's office for the selection of the Dean's Representative. The Dean's office reserves the right to postpone the defense if sufficient notice is not given.



## Thesis and Dissertation Copies:

### ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS OF THESES & DISSERTATIONS:

MSU **only accepts** electronic theses and dissertations submitted via ProQuest. The instructions for electronic submissions are available from <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>.

The target date for the **FINAL APPROVAL** of an electronic Thesis or Dissertation to the Graduate School for graduating the semester of that submission is FIVE working days prior to the first day of classes for the next semester(see future target dates below). **Be aware that a submission via ProQuest does not mean that the document has been ACCEPTED.** The review process is interactive and final approval can take anywhere from a few hours to weeks, depending upon the extent of the necessary revisions and how diligent the author is when making the necessary revisions.

#### Electronic Submission's Approval Target Dates:

*Summer 2011 – August 25*

*Fall 2011 – December 29*

*Spring 2012 – May 4*

*Summer 2012 – August 21*

**Graduation on the semester of the electronic submission is only guaranteed if the document is APPROVED on or before the target date for that semester**

### NEW EXIT SURVEYS:

A new short online exit survey for all students graduating with a Plan A or Plan B masters or with a Doctoral degree was introduced May 9<sup>th</sup> of 2011. Only students who have applied for graduation will have access to the survey. The survey asks questions about educational experiences in MSU graduate programs, as well as about immediate professional plans. The Graduate School uses data from this survey when reviewing graduate programs and to guide decisions about services and initiatives for graduate students.

The identity of all respondents will be kept confidential and only aggregate (group) information will be made available to faculty and administrators. The students will receive an e-mail message from the dean of the graduate school with a link to the survey. However, students do not need to wait for that e-mail message to complete the survey after applying for graduation. It takes about 5-10 minutes to complete the online survey. Below are the instructions for completing the survey and they are also available from <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>

#### **Instructions for students:**

- Access the following website:
  - Doctoral Students: <https://www.egr.msu.edu/doctoral/survey/>
  - Master's Students: <https://www.egr.msu.edu/masters/survey/>
- Enter your MSU NetID (Login Name) and Password
- Complete all the items on the survey. When finished, click **Submit**.

If you cannot open this survey, please contact Katey Smagur by email at [smagurka@msu.edu](mailto:smagurka@msu.edu), and include your name, student ID #, degree level (PhD, MA/MS) and semester of graduation. You will then be notified when you are able to complete the survey.

1. The **Department** requires one hardcopy unbound and an electronic version (as a .pdf on digital media) of the full final thesis or dissertation, upon completion of the degree. The hardcopy and digital media should be given to the Graduate Secretary when completing the final paperwork for the degree. The department will not certify completion of the degree until the hardcopy and digital media have been turned in.
2. **Funding agencies** sometimes also require that students submit a copy (hardcopy or electronic) of a thesis or dissertation resulting from funded research. Students should check with the agencies or organizations involved. Failure to adhere to the granting agency's requirements may result in the granting agency's refusal to consider any future grant applications by that individual.
3. A finalized hard or electronic copy of the thesis or dissertation must be submitted to your **Advisor** and **Guidance Committee**. The student should check with members of the Guidance Committee whether they want an electronic or hardcopy version.
4. **Courtesy copies of the dissertation**. It is a professional courtesy for the student to provide a copy (hardcopy or electronic) of the thesis or dissertation to any individual, agency, or organization that facilitated the dissertation or thesis research. While the student may feel that this extra effort represents an unneeded expense, attention to these professional courtesies is an important part of professional behavior.
5. Note that there are **fees** of several hundred dollars associated with filing your dissertation (copyright, copying, binding, etc.). [COGS currently offers small lottery-based grants to cover these expenses, for information on COGS see Appendix II].



## IV. DEPARTMENTAL AND STUDENT OBLIGATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

The Department has obligations to all graduate students, and conversely the students have certain obligations to the Department and to themselves. The most important of these is to maintain an environment in which there is mutual trust, self-respect and integrity, and to strive to attain excellence in scholarship.

The **Department** will provide for the student:

1. An environment in which scholarly attainment and conduct of meritorious scientific research can be achieved.
2. Responsiveness to valid academic needs and desires.
3. Support and encouragement of creative original study and research.
4. A periodic evaluation of their program and a willingness on the part of the faculty to make changes when warranted.

**Students** have the following responsibilities and goals:

1. To demonstrate a clear aptitude for the various aspects of scientific research and technical proficiency, including knowledge of relevant literature, formulation of hypotheses, experimental tests of hypotheses, analysis of data and the ability to clearly present those data in both oral and written form. At various mileposts through each of the three graduate programs the student is expected to meet stated expectations about progress toward the degree.

### Calendar of Progress:

Program	Advisor selected	Form Guidance Committee	Program of Study/Guidance Committee Report filed	Comprehensive Exams completed	Dissertation Proposal defended
MS Geo	2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	NA	NA
MS GIS	NA	NA	2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	NA	NA
Ph.D.	2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	6 <sup>th</sup> semester	6 <sup>th</sup> semester

All Program of Study (Master's Level) or Guidance Committee Report (Ph.D. Level) forms are available on the ANGEL website <https://angel.msu.edu/default.asp> (in the 'Geography Graduate Program Information' Group).

2. To strive for superior performance in academic coursework.
3. To participate in the academic culture of the department, including attendance at departmental and institutional presentations, brown bags and colloquia, thesis and dissertation defenses, as well as at relevant professional meetings.

### Additional Student Responsibilities and Expectations

It is the responsibility of ALL graduate students to:

- 1) Learn and adhere to University and academic unit rules, procedures and policies, including those outlined in this Graduate Handbook, in Academic Programs, Graduate Student Rights and

Responsibilities, and Academic Freedom for Students at MSU. These publications are available on the Department and Graduate School web sites;

- 2) Meet University and Department requirements for degree completion in a timely manner;
- 3) Select an Advisor and form a Guidance Committee that meets University and Department requirements, and keeping the members of their Committee informed regarding their academic activities and research progress;
- 4) Disciplinary and scholarly codes of ethics in course work, research, and professional activities. Reference the MSU Academic Council and Academic Senate approved a revision of the Integrity of Scholarship and Grades Policy. This document is available at <https://www.msu.edu/~lotz/classes/information/New%20Policy%20on%20Academic%20Integrity.pdf> 5) Follow high ethical standards in accordance with University and federal guidelines in collecting and maintaining data, including seeking regulatory approval for research before any research project begins;
- 6) Exhibit the highest standards of professionalism in teaching, research, and scholarship;
- 7) Provide the Department with copies of research-related documents (such as permits, approvals, grant proposals, research proposals) within the prescribed deadlines; and
- 8) Give the Department your thesis or dissertation as an unbound hard copy and on a disc.

### **Minimum Academic Standards**

GEO graduate students are required to meet and maintain certain academic standards while enrolled in their Geography graduate program. These are:

1. No more than two courses with grades of 2.5 or lower, and
2. No more than eight credits with grades of 2.5 or lower.

This policy holds for **all** courses the student has taken as a graduate student at MSU. The only courses that are exempt from this rule are courses below the 400 level that are not on the student's program of study. Students who fail to meet any one of the above standards will be notified by the Graduate Secretary immediately upon the receipt of the semester grade report. Simultaneous notice will be given, by the Graduate Secretary, to the Department Chairperson, Graduate Program Coordinator, and the student's Advisor. **This information shall be taken as evidence of failure to meet departmental standards, are grounds for dismissal, and the student may be asked to withdraw immediately from the program.**

**\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE: A cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better is required for graduation with a graduate degree from Michigan State University.\*\*\***

### **Time to Completion of Degree:**

It is vital that students make adequate progress in their graduate programs as outlined in the Calendar of Progress. Lack of satisfactory progress toward the degree may jeopardize the student's funding status and other graduate student benefits. Faculty conduct an annual review of all active graduate students (defined as those enrolled for credits during the Academic Year in which the annual review is conducted) and they are sent a letter stating their level of progress in their degree. If progress is inadequate, the department can withhold financial support, assistantship offers, office space, copying privileges, and other similar department resources. A series of unsatisfactory progress letters can lead to dismissal from a program.

The University, Graduate School, and College of Social Science have set the following requirements:

- (1) The time limit for completion of the requirements for the master's degree is **six years** from the date of enrollment in the student's first course in the Master's degree program.
- (2) The PhD Comprehensive Examination must be taken within **five years** of initial acceptance to the program, and **expire after three years** if there has been no progress toward the degree;



(3) All remaining requirements for the Ph.D. degree must be completed within **eight years**, from the time when a student begins the first class at MSU that appears on the 'Report of the Guidance Committee.' Applications for extensions of the eight-year period of time toward degree must be submitted by the department/school for approval by the Dean of the College and the Dean of The Graduate School. Should the degree requirements not be completed within this eight-year period, all of the doctoral comprehensive exams must be passed again.

(4) Master's and Ph.D. students whose enrollment at MSU is interrupted for any reason so that they have not been enrolled for three consecutive semester, including Summer Session, are automatically dropped from their program and must reapply for readmission via the Web at [www.reg.msu.edu](http://www.reg.msu.edu).

***\*\*\* This is a very important rule if you are anticipating completing a thesis or dissertation away from campus. \*\*\****

Time extensions for the master's degree and the doctoral degree are difficult to obtain and must be approved by the Department Chair, the College of Social Sciences, and the Graduate School. The Graduate School will allow an extension for only a specific time period, normally no longer than one year. The extension will include a specific time frame for each remaining requirement.

Additional requirements for an advanced degree are also set by the Graduate School and the College of Social Science. All Geography graduate students should become thoroughly familiar with these requirements by consulting the *Academic Programs* guide which can be viewed on the web at: <http://www.reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Index.asp>.

#### **Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution**

The University has established a judicial structure and process for hearing and adjudicating alleged violations of recognized graduate student rights and responsibilities (see Article 5 of the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities handbook of the Graduate School). However, the first venue to resolve such conflicts informally or formally rests with the department. Because the faculty Advisor-graduate student relationship is deemed so important, special attention should be given to the resolution of conflicts between a graduate student and his or her faculty Advisor.

Students who find themselves in conflict with other students, course instructors, or committee members are advised to seek guidance and support from their Advisor or from the Graduate Program Coordinator. For disputes or grievances involving Advisors or the Graduate Program Coordinator, students are advised to seek council through the Chairperson of the department.

#### **Dismissal**

The department has the option to dismiss students from a program. Dismissal from a program is based on one of the following:

- 1) Grades below the minimum academic standards (see above);
- 2) Lack of progress toward degree;
- 3) Student conduct.

#### **Grievances**

If a student is dissatisfied with any part of their graduate program, the student should first consult with their Advisor about the issue/problem. If the issue is not resolved, then the student should consult with the Graduate Program Coordinator. If the issue is not resolved at that level, the Department Chair should be consulted, thereafter the College of Social Science Associate Dean for Graduate Affairs, thereafter the Graduate School Dean's office. Further recourse is available through the standard grievance procedure outlined in the Student Handbook and Resource Guide <http://www.vps.msu.edu/SpLife/default.pdf>. The University Ombudsman is another resource for problem solving, <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/>

Other resources are *Academic Programs* (for both undergraduate and graduate programs) can be viewed on the web at: <http://www.reg.msu.edu/UCC/AcademicPrograms.asp>.

### **Dismissals and Withdrawals**

In rare instances the Department is faced with the potential dismissal or withdrawal of a student. If a student decides to terminate the graduate program, he or she is required to inform the Department by letter in a timely manner outlining the reasons for withdrawal and the timing of departure from the unit. In matters where dismissal of a student becomes a potential issue due to failure to perform required tasks or maintain the appropriate academic standing, the student will be initially informed by letter of Departmental concerns. If the required changes are not made, a second letter will follow shortly. If, after this second letter problems remain, then a third and final letter will be delivered that outlines the Department's desire to dismiss the student.

*Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide*, which includes **Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities**, is available in The Office of the Ombudsman, 129 N. Kedzie and in 101 Student Services. It can also be downloaded from <http://www.vps.msu.edu/SpLife/default.pdf>.

### **Travelling on MSU business**

Any travel that you do as a student that is related to your research (conference presentations, fieldwork) is considered to be 'university business.' When you are travelling in this capacity, you are **REQUIRED** to fill out an Emergency Contact Form (available via ANGEL, see Geography Graduate Program Information' for the form) for **EACH** trip that you take. This form is necessary so that the university knows where we are and to be able to contact us in case of an emergency. Completion of the form generates a Travel Authorization, a form that needs to be on file before you depart. Please complete the Emergency Contact Form and send to Ms. Ruggles ([ruggles@msu.edu](mailto:ruggles@msu.edu)).

Students traveling abroad should visit the 'Travel Smart' website (<http://grad.msu.edu/travel/>) before their trip. When students appointed as a TA or an RA travel outside the U.S. to conduct required thesis or dissertation research, or to collaborate with investigators conducting research abroad, the department or research grant supporting the work will be required to pay for all needed vaccinations and/or medications (e.g., anti-malarials) as determined by the MSU Travel Clinic. Students may include those costs in applications for funds from the Research Enhancement or Travel Grant programs administered by the Graduate School.



## V. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES REGARDING INTEGRITY AND SAFETY IN RESEARCH

Integrity in research and creative activities is based on sound disciplinary practices as well as on a commitment to basic values such as fairness, equity, honesty and respect. Students learn to value professional integrity and high standards of ethical behavior through interaction with members of their academic unit and their faculty Advisor and by emulating exemplary behavior. In this section of the handbook, the program's expectations for the responsible conduct of research and creative activities of graduate students is spelled out. Additionally, explicit criteria for dismissal for reasons other than academic deficiencies, including research misconduct, dishonesty with respect to grades or academic records and scholarship, and violations of professional standards are explained.

**Laboratory Safety.** All students working in the Geomorphology or Pollen Laboratories, outside of regularly scheduled classes, must have prior approval by a faculty member. No approval can be given unless students have completed safety training (to handle hazardous material) provided by MSU's Office of Radiation, Chemical and Biological Safety (ORCBS). ORCBS is in charge of laboratory safety and hazardous waste disposal on campus and they provide the initial and follow-up lab safety training. Specifically, students must complete ORCBS's initial on-line course in Chemical Hygiene and Laboratory/Hazardous Waste Safety Training ([http://www.hazmat.msu.edu/CHI/CHI\\_intro.htm](http://www.hazmat.msu.edu/CHI/CHI_intro.htm)). This training is valid for a year and before 12 months have expired the students must complete an on-line Hazardous Waste Refresher training session to continue working in the laboratories. Federal law mandates this training, and we must assure that all of the workers handling hazardous materials have valid clearance. For further information: <http://www.orcbs.msu.edu/>.

**Human Subjects Research.** A student whose research involves human subjects **IN ANY WAY** must receive approval for their project from the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) *prior* to initiating data collection for their master's thesis, pre-dissertation research, or doctoral dissertation. HRPP is an Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Federal and University regulations *require* that all research projects involving human subjects be reviewed and approved by an IRB before initiation. Under the regulations, research is defined as a formal investigation designed to develop or contribute to general knowledge. A human subject of research is an individual (1) from whom an investigator obtains data by interaction or intervention or (2) about whom the researcher obtains confidential information.

Depending upon the level of risk to subjects in the protocol, HRPP assigns the student's application to one of three review categories (exempt from full review, expedited review, and full review) and sends it to one, two or five reviewers, respectively. If the reviewer(s) is satisfied that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are adequately protected, he or she approves it. However, if the reviewer has concerns, the reviewer returns written comments to the HRPP office for transmission to the investigator. The investigator must then send a response to each comment, in writing, to HRPP which will forward it to the reviewer(s). If the proposal is either an exempt or expedited proposal, an approval letter can be issued as soon as the reviewer(s) approves. When a proposal receives full (five-member sub-committee) review, an approval letter is issued after the proposal is discussed and approved by vote of the full committee at its monthly meeting. Reference: <http://humanresearch.msu.edu/>

Copies of the HRPP application form and the official notification of HRPP approval must be kept in the student's file maintained by the Department's Graduate Secretary and in the files maintained by the student's Advisor. The student should also keep copies in his/her own personal files. Failure to satisfy the University and Department ethical standards and HRPP regulations is considered grounds for dismissal of a student from the program. A copy of the approval must be included as an appendix in the thesis or dissertation.



## VI. GRADUATE ASSISTANT INFORMATION

In this section we make explicit Geography's expectations concerning graduate students work related to graduate assistantships (GAs). Graduate Assistants are Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Research Assistants (RAs). All policies related to graduate assistantships must be consistent with GSRR 4.2.1 – 4.2.8. For graduate assistants appointed as teaching assistants, the policy also must conform to the specifications of the current MSU/GEU Contract (<http://geuatmsu.org/>). Reference: <http://grad.msu.edu/>.

There are four classes (and three levels) of graduate assistantships: Level 1- Master's Level, Level 2 - Master's Level and Level 2-Doctoral Level and Level 3-Doctoral Level. In any one semester, the stipend per assistantship unit is the same for all assistantships that level. Actual stipend rates are set by MSU in the summer and become effective on August 15.

Levels are determined as follows:

**Level 1** – graduate student, bachelor's degree and less than one academic year's experience as a graduate assistant or as full-support fellow

**Level 2** – graduate student, relevant master's degree (30 semester credits or equivalent) and/or two semesters' experience as a graduate assistant or as full-support fellow in the employing unit.

**Level 3** – a) Six semesters of experience as a graduate research assistant or teaching assistant and a relevant master's degree or equivalent. The definition of equivalent experience as a research assistant or teaching assistant should be left to the discretion of the chairperson of the appointing unit, but it is expected that only experience in research-oriented assignments would count toward the six semesters of experience as an research assistant. (Consistent with current practice, 1/4- time and 3/4-time appointments count the same as 1/2-time appointments, and Summer Semesters count the same as Fall and Spring Semesters.) *or* b) Successful completion of doctoral comprehensive exams, as defined by the department in which the student is enrolled. NOTE: Masters "equivalency" shall be defined as the requirements set forth in the University Guide to Academic Programs for the department in which the employee is enrolled. If no Master's degree is offered by that department, then the MSU minimum requirement (30 credits) for the Master's degree will apply.

Graduate Assistants are paid on Fridays on a bi-weekly basis. You can find the Graduate Assistant Payroll schedule on the Payroll website: <http://www.ctr.msu.edu/COPayroll/> (see Payroll schedules). Graduate assistantship stipends are not subject to Social Security (FICA) taxes. Stipends are subject to income taxes with few exceptions.

### **If you wish to be considered for an assistantship**

The Awards Committee makes recommendations to the Chair once per year (usually at the end of February or early March) regarding who will receive Departmental Funding. If you have not been awarded a multi-year Graduate Assistantship, or your term is set to expire, and you wish to be considered for Departmental Funding, write a letter to the Graduate Program Coordinator requesting consideration for a one semester or one year Graduate Assistantship. This letter should reach the GPC by February 1. This letter should come from the applicant (i.e. the graduate student) not the advisor.

## Direct Deposit

It is recommended that everyone set up Direct Deposit of Student accounts (possible fellowships) and for those on an assistantship and/or student employment of your Payroll accounts.

You can do this through STUINFO:

<https://stuinfo.msu.edu/>

OR

Through the EBS Portal:

[www.ebs.msu.edu](http://www.ebs.msu.edu)

- click the EBS Portal Login
- sign in with your MSU Net ID and password
- choose the ESS tab and then the Payroll sub tab
- click Direct Deposit Information
- click the Edit button

Follow through to the Confirmation section. You will receive a email confirmation.

through the EBS Portal

<https://login.msu.edu/?App=EBSP-SecPortal>

NOTE: There are STUDENT accounts and PAYROLL accounts. In STUINFO the Student accounts direct deposit link can be found in the middle column and for Payroll accounts the link is at the bottom of the page.

International students must visit the Payroll Office (room 350 Hannah Administration Building) to pick up an information packet to complete and return. The taxability of stipends is subject to review by the Internal Revenue Service. Please call the Payroll office for more information, at 355-5010.

**Tuition waiver:** A waiver of the out-of-state tuition rate is granted to out-of-state students during the semester of appointment, and for full academic year appointees, for the summer session that precedes or follows an appointment for an entire academic year. A nine-credit tuition waiver is granted each semester while holding an appointment. For summer session appointments, the waiver is five credits.

**Important:** If you have an assistantship you are REQUIRED to enroll for a minimum of 6 credits at the Master's level and 3 credits at the Ph.D. level during Fall/Spring semester and 3 credits in Summer semester for both Master's and Ph.D. degrees. At the Ph.D. level, once you complete your comprehensive exams, the following semesters you need to only be enrolled for one credit.

Michigan State University offers graduate assistants health insurance coverage. 'Student only' coverage is automatically provided at no cost to graduate assistants. Michigan State University will provide a full twelve months of coverage if your appointment is at least nine months.

### IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR MSU STUDENT HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN CONTACT EITHER ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

#### MSU Human Resources Benefits Office

(517) 353-4434

E-mail: [studentinsurance@hr.msu.edu](mailto:studentinsurance@hr.msu.edu)

<http://www.hr.msu.edu/Benefits/StudentHealth/>

#### Aetna Student Health

800-859-8452

<http://www.aetnastudenthealth/msudirect.htm>

## University Expectations for TAs

As a Michigan State University teaching assistant you play a vital role in the educational mission of MSU. Disciplinary knowledge and instructional skills are key requisites for being a successful teacher, but



teaching assistants are also expected to conform to ethical and professional standards described in the MSU Code of Teaching Responsibility. Treat your students with respect, deal with conflict fairly and promote a classroom atmosphere that encourages free and meaningful exchange of ideas. Familiarize yourself with the MSU Code of Teaching Responsibility as you strive to achieve educational excellence, for both yourself and your students. If you hold a ¼ time appointment you are expected to work 10 hours per week; for a ½ time appointment 20 hours per week. Please note that these are average hours and that due to the nature of teaching there may be weeks with more work and weeks with less work.

### **University Expectations for RAs**

As a Michigan State University research assistant you play a vital role in the research and outreach missions of MSU. Disciplinary knowledge and research/laboratory skills are key requisites for conducting research, but research assistants are also expected to conform to ethical and professional standards described in the MSU Faculty Handbook Section IV: Research and Creative Endeavors. This section includes information on working with animal and human subjects, radiation, chemical, and biological safety, and adherence to federal guidelines on data generation, management and control. Sections of the Academic Freedom Report for MSU Students and the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities document also contain valuable information as you strive to achieve research excellence. If you hold a ¼ time appointment you are expected to work 10 hours per week; for a ½ time appointment 20 hours per week. Please note that these are average hours and that due to the nature of research there may be weeks with more work and weeks with less work.

### **Graduate Assistants Travelling Abroad on MSU Business (TA or RA)**

See section above about Travelling on MSU business.

### **Graduate Employees Union (GEU), 332-2824 (<http://www.geuatmsu.org/>)**

*Teaching Assistants:* The Graduate Employees Union (GEU) is the legal collective bargaining unit for all graduate employees designated as teaching assistants at MSU. The University is obligated to bargain a contract with GEU concerning pay, benefits (including health insurance and tuition waivers), and working conditions. The current contract guarantees yearly wage increases, protection from overwork, a grievance procedure that addresses a variety of issues arising in the work place, University contributions for family health coverage, and many other benefits and protections.

*VERY IMPORTANT:* If you are a TA you will automatically become part of the collective bargaining unit of the union. In addition you can join the union and become a 'dues paying member' that gives you voting rights. Upon your TA appointment you will be asked to fill out a GEU card on which you indicate whether you want to join the union or only be part of the collective bargaining unit. If you do not fill out a union card, you can lose your assistantship. You will only need to fill out this card once (unless you are changing to 'dues paying' membership) during your graduate career at MSU.

*Research Assistants:* If you have been awarded a RA, you have the *option* to become part of the collective bargaining unit of GEU or to join as a 'dues paying member.'



## VI TRIPLEG - THE 'GEOGRAPHY GRADUATE GROUP!'

The broad goals of the organization, TripleG (or the Geography Grad Group), are to build strong ties within the graduate students population and between graduate students, faculty and staff within the Department of Geography at Michigan State University. Specifically, the functions of TripleG include:

1. Exchanging stories and giving support about the unique experience of being a graduate student and more specifically a Geography grad student at MSU. TripleG provides times and spaces for this. Also, by knowing each other it builds a friendly more productive work environment. For example TripleG has a bulletin board with photos and information about the grads as well as an online forum.
2. To have a unified and stronger voice on issues that affect the department and our programs directly. Keeping lines of communication open between grad students and faculty is important. For example, TripleG has an elected representative to the faculty meetings to make our opinions known.
3. To have a real meaningful impact on the department decisions based on a long-term respectful and thoughtful unified voice. For example, by being organized the graduate students can request input in a more systematic and transparent way.
4. To share information and resources available: For example: computer software and hardware information, activities, class recommendations, ANGEL tutorial, funding resources, etc.
5. Spreading the word about our department's strengths to attract top quality grads and new faculty to build status and clout as a department. For example, getting information that is helpful to potential student, and new grad students to them allowing for a much smoother transitions and a more informed decision making process.
6. To document all the work TripleG does year-to-year so grads build a wealth of information and support services. For example, keeping records of meeting decisions and general information on our webpage for future grads to use.
7. TripleG promotes continued excellence in academics by giving mutual feedback for papers and presentations. Collaborating on research and ideas; for example, organizing panels at meetings.

For more information go to:

<http://www.tripleg.Geo.msu.edu/>

<http://www.tripleg.Geo.msu.edu/forum/>

## APPENDIX I: DEPARTMENTAL RESOURCES

A. **The Geography Department Office.** The office (rooms 116, 117, and 118) is open and staff is available to assist you from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, and from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on every day that the University is open. The Geography office is closed on weekends and on University holidays.

B. **Mail.** Please check your physical mailboxes each day for personal mail, departmental notices, etc. The mailboxes are located in room 118 Geography Building.

C. **Keys and Building Access.** The Geography building is closed evenings and weekends, the hours are posted on exterior doors. So that you can access the building after hours, give the 6 digit number on the back of your ID card to the Graduate Secretary. It will take about 24 hours for ID card to be activated. You can check that your card is working correctly by testing your card at the handicap access door, if the doors automatically open, you know your card is activated. You will receive keys for the mailroom, copy room, conference and computer rooms, and if assigned, an office key. To avoid penalty, return all keys when you leave MSU.

D. **Email accounts.** All students should obtain email accounts on the MSU email system as soon as they are established MSU students. These are available at no cost and serve as the primary means of communicating. Once you have obtained your account, please inform the Graduate Secretary of your email address so that it can be added to the various Departmental mailing lists. If you also obtain an account on the Sun workstations, you will also be able to send and receive mail with that account. **Please note that ALL university communication (e.g. when you are a TA or RA) MUST be done using the MSU account.**

E. **Telephone.** Personal long distance telephone calls CANNOT to be placed on departmental phones (phones in graduate student area are secured from long distance calls). If you MUST make a long distance call that is work related, please check with your major professor to see if and how your need can be accommodated. For personal calls please use a calling card or cell phone.

F. **Copy Machine.** Graduate students are allowed 1000 free photocopies per semester (including summer session). A copy machine access code will be assigned to you – it is the last four digits of your PID number. Staff in the Geography Department office can assist you if you forget your code. If you go over your allotment of free copies, you will be notified and your copy code will be suspended until the beginning of the next semester.

G. **Plotter Policy.** The Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Science Research and Outreach Services (RS&GIS) maintain a plotter for departmental use on a pay-as-you-go basis. The department has negotiated an arrangement with RS&GIS so that graduate students can use this service. All active graduate students that are in good standing in the department are eligible for **one (1) poster size plot per academic year**. A plotting request will need to be made **two (2) business days** before the plot is needed. Please note that RS&GIS is not a 24/7 operation but works on an 8-5, M-F basis. Plot requests need to be made to Sarah AcMoody in room 225 ([acmoody@msu.edu](mailto:acmoody@msu.edu)). Poster materials may be submitted on CD, flash drive, via e-mail, etc. Graduate students may *not* operate the plotter themselves. Only one paper plot will be paid for by the department per year. Please be sure that the material is ready for final printing before submitting your plot request. The department will not cover the cost of draft plots. If you are presenting a second poster at a conference or similar event, requests for additional plots can be made, in writing, to the department Chair and Graduate Program Coordinator.

H. **Proctoring.** Additional proctors are frequently needed to help supervise large section exams. Proctors are paid per exam and are paid on the Student Payroll. Signup sheets are in the mailroom (room 118).

I. **Miscellaneous funding opportunities.** To support graduate student research, the department offers Graduate Office Fellowships (GOFs) on an annual competitive basis. These awards, usually between \$500



and \$2,000, are used to recruit high-ranking students as well as to support fieldwork or to purchase data for research. GOFs are taxed for international students. The tax rate is Federal 14% and State .0435%. Note that depending on where you live your income may be subject to local income taxes as well (e.g. Lansing). Limited funds are also available on a competitive basis to defray costs of attending professional meetings. In addition, the department offers support to defray the expenses of attending a professional meeting such as the annual or regional meetings of the Association of American Geographers.

## APPENDIX II: UNIVERSITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

A. **PID and PIN numbers.** These personal identification numbers are assigned to you as soon as you have been admitted and agree to attend MSU.

B. **Student ID Cards.** All students must have a valid student ID card and student number. Student IDs can be obtained in Room 170 International Center. To have access to the Geography Building, please see the Graduate Secretary with your new ID card.

C. **Parking on campus.** If you own a motor vehicle and want to use it on campus, you must register it with the University Vehicle Office. This office is located in the Public Safety Building, 87 South Red Cedar Road. To register a vehicle you need the vehicle registration, proof of insurance, and if you have an assistantship a copy of your signed appointment form which is given to you by the Graduate Secretary. If you have a graduate assistantship you can also register your car on-line at <http://www.dpps.msu.edu/>. Parking on campus for graduate students is limited.

D. **Bicycles.** The University maintains bicycle racks throughout the campus. Bikes should be locked to these racks when parked. Bikes are **not permitted** in campus buildings. Improperly parked bikes are subject to impoundment by the Department of Public Safety. Bicycle registration through the MSU Department of Public Safety or the cities of East Lansing or Lansing is required. You can register your bike on-line at: <http://www.dpps.msu.edu/>

E. **Student Services.** Michigan State University provides extensive student personnel services to assist students and enhance the educational experience. Michigan State University recognizes that the total development of the individual, personal, social, and physical, as well as intellectual, is of equal importance. Important telephone numbers include:

<b>Graduate Record Examination sign-up:</b> <a href="http://www.testingoffice.msu.edu/">http://www.testingoffice.msu.edu/</a>	207 Student Services, 355-8385
<b>Graduate Employees Union:</b> <a href="http://www.geuatmsu.org/">http://www.geuatmsu.org/</a>	332-2824
<b>Financial Aid/Student Loan:</b> <a href="http://finaid.msu.edu/">http://finaid.msu.edu/</a>	259 Student Services, 353-5940
<b>Office of Financial Aid:</b> <a href="http://finaid.msu.edu/">http://finaid.msu.edu/</a>	252 Student Services, 353-5940
<b>University Housing</b> <a href="http://www.hfs.msu.edu/uh/">http://www.hfs.msu.edu/uh/</a>	1205 S. Harrison Rd, 355-9550

F. **Graduate School.** The Graduate School at MSU (118 Linton Hall) offers many workshops and other programs for graduate students. Examples are the Graduate Student Resource Fair, the Activities Fair and workshops on completing a thesis/ dissertation, dealing with conflict, teaching issues, etc. For more info: <http://grad.msu.edu/> or call 355-0300.

G. **PREP Program.** The Graduate School at MSU also provides a professional development program, PREP, which "focuses on four professional skills that are key to career and professional development: **Planning** throughout the graduate career to identify and successfully achieve career goals; developing **Resilience** and tenacity to thrive through personal and professional stages; practicing active **Engagement** in making important life decisions and in acquiring the skills necessary to attain career goals; and attaining high standards of **Professionalism** in research and teaching." See the Graduate Student Career and Professional Development website for more details: <http://grad.msu.edu/>.



**H. Michigan State University Library.** It is strongly suggested that you take advantage of the library tours in order to more thoroughly familiarize yourself with all the available resources.

<http://www.lib.msu.edu/>. There are also a number of branch libraries on campus.

<b>Information Desk:</b>	353-8700
<b>Library Hours:</b>	432-6123
<b>Map Library 3rd floor Main Library:</b>	432-6123 x 249

**I. Office for International Students and Scholars,** 103 International Center 353-1720, The Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS) serves international students and international faculty. OISS is a resource center for information and consultation on matters related to international students and faculty/scholars. The staff is prepared to help in any of the various areas of concern, including academic problems, immigration questions, social health, employment or financial matters. The office also organizes seminars and workshops on topics of interest to the broad university community. These have included immigration regulations, cross-cultural communication, pre-departure programs for graduating students and various training programs. They also publish a very informative handbook called Welcome to Our Community that answers questions you may have about living and going to school in our community. A copy of this handbook can be picked up in the OISS. <http://www.oiss.msu.edu/>

<b>English Language Center:</b>	1 International Center, 353-0800
<a href="http://www.elc.msu.edu/">http://www.elc.msu.edu/</a>	
<b>International Students &amp; Scholars:</b>	103 International Center, 353-1720
<a href="http://www.oiss.msu.edu/">http://www.oiss.msu.edu/</a>	
<b>Office of Study Abroad:</b>	109 International Center, 353-8920
<a href="http://studyabroad.msu.edu/">http://studyabroad.msu.edu/</a>	
<b>International Studies &amp; Programs, Deans Office:</b>	209 International Center, 355-2350
<a href="http://www.isp.msu.edu/">http://www.isp.msu.edu/</a>	

**J. Learning Resources Center,** 202 Bessey Hall 355-2363. This is a self-paced, individualized learning center that offers free assistance to students who want to improve their study skills. Its goal is to help you develop the strategies and techniques you need to be successful student. Workshops on specific study skills are offered throughout the year. Reference: <http://lrc.msu.edu/>

**K. The Writing Center,** 300 Bessey Hall 432-3610. This center offers writing consultation to graduate as well as undergraduate students. One on one consultations are best for small papers or projects like vitas, abstracts and cover letters, while peer response writing groups offer help developing drafts of larger projects like research and conference papers, and even theses and dissertations. The center also has a library with books on resumes, vitas and cover letters, and examples of all of the above. Call 432-3610 to make an appointment, or email [grammar@msu.edu](mailto:grammar@msu.edu) for grammatical questions. You can also see their web site at (<http://writing.msu.edu>) for more information. This is an excellent place to have one more set of eyes offering advice on important writing assignments.

**L. Career Services and Placement,** 113 Student Services 355-9510. The Career Services and Placement office assists students in career advising and seeking employment upon graduation. Their office is located in 113 Student Services Building. Their staff does workshops, classes and individual advising on topics such as how to interview successfully and steps to creating a well-written resume or C.V. You may also interview for internships or full-time employment through the Career Placement office. The Career Information Center, located in room 6 Student Services Bldg (353-6474) provides up-to-date information on career possibilities, self-evaluation tools, and resource material on career choice, planning and strategy. Reference: <http://www.csp.msu.edu/>

**M. Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities,** 120 Bessey Hall 353-9642. Staff specialists available to respond to mobility, visual, hearing, alternative learner, and other handicapper populations to enable their



involvement in University activities. Other resources are available to students with special needs.

Reference: <http://www.rcpd.msu.edu/Home/>

**N. Counseling Center Main Office**, 207 Student Services Building 355-8270. Students should feel free to contact the Counseling Center for personal concerns and crises. Professional counseling and psychological services are offered to assist with personal, as well as career concerns. All services are confidential. Initial consultations are free of charge; all services are free to students carrying 7 or more credits. In addition to professional counseling a self-management laboratory, and workshops are offered. Reference: <http://www.couns.msu.edu/>

**O. Olin Health Center** 355-7573. The Student Health Service is located in Olin Health Center and is the primary location for student health services on campus. *What to do when Olin is closed?*: Not sure if it is an emergency? Call the Olin Phone Information Nurse 24 hours a day at 353-5557. For a serious emergency when Olin Health Center is closed – go to the nearest hospital emergency department. The hospital emergency department closest to campus is Lansing's Sparrow Hospital at 1215 East Michigan Avenue. Reference: <http://olin.msu.edu/>

<b>Olin Health Center Information Desk:</b>	355-4510
<b>Olin Health Center Appointments:</b>	353-4660
<b>Olin Pharmacy:</b> 103 Olin Health Center	353-9165
<b>Travel Clinic:</b>	353-3161
<b>Student Insurance Questions:</b> Benefits Administration, 140 Nisbet Bldg	353-4434 x170

**P. Women's Resource Center**, 332 Union Building 353-1635. The WRC coordinates contacts relating to concerns of women and advocates women's issues by developing and implementing programs targeted for women faculty staff and students. They sponsor many workshops on campus. Reference: <http://wrc.msu.edu/>

**Q. Intramural Sports Facilities**, 355-5250. Students have access to equipment and facilities in the intramural facilities located in the IM West, IM East, and IM Circle. Students must present a current MSU student ID in order to be admitted to these facilities and borrow the equipment. Use of most of the facilities is free to currently enrolled students, although there are a few exceptions, such as a fee for the use of the weight room in IM East and IM West. Reference: <http://www.imsports.msu.edu/>

**R. MSU Student Food Bank**. COGS and ASMSU jointly established a Student Food Bank to address the problems of students and their families with financial hardship. The SFB is located at Olin Health Center, and hours are 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday evenings. Email: [foodbank@msu.edu](mailto:foodbank@msu.edu) Reference: <https://www.msu.edu/~foodbank/>

**S. Council of Graduate Students (COGS)**, 316 Student Services 353-9189 (353-COGS). COGS is the official graduate student organization at Michigan State University. Officers and departmental representatives (one representative per department for the entire University) are voting members. The primary objective is improvement of the academic, social, and economic position of graduate students at MSU. The organization has official delegates to the Graduate Council, the Academic Council and standing committees thereof, and several all-university and presidential committees. Through membership in these and other bodies, COGS participates in decisions on such matters as tuition and fees, the grading system, traffic regulations, academic and extracurricular programs of the university, graduate assistant stipends, improvements in on and off campus student living conditions, academic freedom and responsibilities, student representation in university government, and the selection of principal administrative officers. Meetings are open to all graduate students. For further information, contact the department for the name of your representative. Reference: <http://cogs.msu.edu/>



#### T. Computing and Statistical Information and Services

'User Services' offers consulting help on canned statistical programs and 'helps students help themselves.' It refers students elsewhere if User Services cannot offer enough assistance. User Services will help students short of doing the job for them. There is no charge for the consulting service. Graduate student consultants from the Department of Statistics and Probability are available on an appointment basis for about ten hours a week. They consult about design problems, appropriate statistical design, etc. There is no charge for this service. A number of short courses are offered through User Services, including a basic introduction to the computer, and discussion of collection and coding of data, offered at the beginning of the term. User Services, telephone numbers, 353-1800 Computing Information Center, 353-1800 Mainframe/Host Access Support Services. Programming Services, 355-4684, is a professional group that charges professional fees for computer work. They can offer some statistical help although they are limited in this area. They can do just about any computer programming work. All students are given an estimate of charges which they must approve before the job is performed. Reference: <http://www.msu.edu/current/index.html> (see Technology).

<b>Help Desk:</b>		432-6200
<b>Computer Store:</b>	110 Computer Center	432-0700
<b>Scoring Office:</b>	114 Computer Center	355-1819

**U. Graduate Funding Opportunities.** In addition to GOF and Departmental conference report (see item H in Appendix I), Area Studies Centers, the Graduate School, and the College of Social Science, offer limited funds to offset travel to conferences and to conduct fieldwork. Dissertation Completion Fellowships are also available on a competitive basis. Information on additional graduate student funding opportunities can be found on the Graduate School website at: <http://grad.msu.edu/funding.htm>.

#### V. Tax Form/Direct Deposit Direct Deposit

It is recommended that everyone set up Direct Deposit of Student accounts (possible fellowships) and for those on an assistantship and/or student employment of your Payroll accounts.

You can do this through STUINFO:

<https://stuinfo.msu.edu/>

OR

through the EBS Portal

<https://login.msu.edu/?App=EBS-Portal>

NOTE: There are STUDENT accounts and PAYROLL accounts. In STUINFO the Student accounts direct deposit link can be found in the middle column and for Payroll accounts the link is at the bottom of the page.

International students must visit the Payroll Office (room 350 Hannah Administration Building) to pick up an information packet to complete and return. The taxability of stipends is subject to review by the Internal Revenue Service. Please call the Payroll office for more information, at 355-5010.

Anyone who does not have a social security card or whose card is lost, stolen or destroyed must apply for a card from the Social Security Administration. Their local office is: Social Security Office, 5210 Perry Robinson, Lansing MI 48911 – Office phone: (800) 772-1213 or (517) 393-3876 or TTY: (800) 325-0778.

#### W. Other Important Contact Information:

<b>Dean's Office, College of Social Science:</b>	203 Berkey Hall,	355-6676
<a href="http://socialscience.msu.edu/">http://socialscience.msu.edu/</a>		
<b>Admissions and Scholarships:</b>	250 Admin. Bldg,	355-8332
<a href="http://admissions.msu.edu/">http://admissions.msu.edu/</a>		
<b>Registrar's Office:</b>	150 Admin. Bldg,	355-3300
<a href="http://www.reg.msu.edu/">http://www.reg.msu.edu/</a>		
<b>Student Receivables:</b>	142 Admin. Bldg,	355-3343
<a href="http://www.ctrl.msu.edu/COSTudentAccounts/">http://www.ctrl.msu.edu/COSTudentAccounts/</a>		

**Payroll:** 350 Admin. Bldg, 355-5010  
**Transcripts:** 50 Admin. Bldg, 355-5150  
<http://www.reg.msu.edu/StuForms/TranscriptRequest/Transcript.asp>



### APPENDIX III. Frequently Asked Questions (in no particular order)

*How can I apply for funding if I was not awarded a Departmental Graduate Assistant or my term has expired?*

The Awards Committee makes recommendations to the Chair once per year (usually at the end of February or early March) regarding who will receive Departmental Funding. If you have not been awarded a multi-year Graduate Assistantship, or your term is set to expire, and you wish to be considered for Departmental Funding, write a letter to the Graduate Program Coordinator requesting consideration for a one semester or one year Graduate Assistantship. This letter should reach the GPC by February 1. This letter should come from the applicant (i.e. the graduate student) not the advisor.

*What happens if I go over my 1000 free copies per semester limit?*

You will be notified that you have reached your 1000 copies and your copy code will be suspended until the beginning of the next semester.

*How do I hook up my personal computer to the printer network?*

Information available via TripleG, <http://www.tripleg.geo.msu.edu/>.

*How do I call outside of campus from an on-campus phone?*

Press 8 first. No long distance calls are possible so you will need a phone card.

*Where do I live?*

There is a comprehensive resource for Geography Grads and housing on the TripleG website (<http://www.tripleg.geo.msu.edu/>) under Life in Lansing.

*Can I switch from the MS in Geography to the MS in GISc degree program, or vice-versa?*

Yes, switches are allowed but not encouraged. And only one switch is allowed per student.

*How do I switch from the MS in Geography to the MS in GISc degree program, or vice-versa?*

To switch from one Master's program to another, the student should first get the approval (verbally is OK) from their Advisor that the switch is acceptable and in the student's best interest. Next, the Advisor and the student should approach the Graduate Program Coordinator with a formal request, in writing, for the switch. If approved, the Graduate Program Coordinator will then pass on the request to the Chair. If the Chair approves the switch, the Graduate Secretary will then process the necessary paperwork. Switches from one Master's program to the other are serious and are not taken lightly; once a student has switched, he or she may not switch back.

*How do I change my Major Advisor?*

According to the MSU student handbook, graduate students are members of the academic community at the university and therefore have certain rights. Within that community, the graduate student's most essential right is the right to learn. The Department of Geography shares this view. In this context, one of the most important relationships a student will develop in the Department is with his or her Major Advisor. In rare circumstances the student will choose to change advisors in the middle of his or her academic program. If such a situation arises, the student should first discuss options with the Graduate Coordinator in the Department. If the student chooses to proceed with a change of Advisor, he or she will write a letter outlining the desire to make such a switch. This letter should include a discussion of reasons for the change and a plan for how to proceed with the selection of a new Major Advisor. This letter should be addressed to the Graduate Coordinator and Department Chair. Assuming the Department Chair approves the request, the student will proceed with the selection of a new Major Advisor.



*When should I begin to sign up for 899 or 999 credits?*

You can sign up for thesis or dissertation credits whenever you like, as long as you can justifiably say that you are working on your thesis or dissertation during that semester. Often, students will sign up for these types of credits in a semester when they have an assistantship (which covers up to 9 credits) and are taking less than 9 credits of formal coursework. MS in Geography students need 4-6 credits of Geo 899 credits and PhD students need 24 credits of Geo 999. The department prefers that you not sign up for more than the maximum thesis credits, but if you need to for logistical or other acceptable reason, it is permitted. Overall try to use your thesis credits carefully taking them into special consideration when mapping out your program.

*What about having a Guidance Committee member who is a faculty member at another university?*

In this situation, the faculty member from another university can be part of our Guidance Committee as an extra' (fifth) member. 'Extra' members of a Guidance Committee are welcome to participate in composing and evaluating your exams, attending your proposal defense, dissertation defense and so forth at their own expense. But the University does not require that they do so. However, if this person is officially a Guidance Committee member, his/her signature is required on any document that requires the signature of your Guidance Committee. If he/she is not physically present at the dissertation defense, it is required that he/she submit a written critique of the dissertation. He/she would also have a vote regarding your performance.

*How many credits represent 'full time' for a graduate student?*

There are several definitions of 'full-time.' For *academic* purposes - full-time is 9 credits at the master's level and 6 credits doctoral level. BUT, if you have a 1/2 time graduate assistantship then full-time is 6 credits master's and 3 credits doctoral. For doctoral students who have completed their comprehensive exams and defended their proposal or are doing field work - 1 credit is full-time. For *financial aid* purposes the credits can be different and depends on the type of funding you have received. You need to check with Financial Aid to determine what is considered full-time for their situation. These rules do not include the summer sessions, just Fall and Spring.

*What if I have a graduate assistantship? How many credits do I have to register for? What's the minimum? What's the maximum?*

For a half-time assistantship, you must have 6 credits if you are a master's student, or 3 credits if you are a doctoral student. Maximum enrollment is 16 credits of coursework, but additional credits of GEO 899 are allowed. There are two exceptions. In the summer semester, the minimum enrollment is 3 credits (for either master's or doctoral students). If you are receiving your degree during the semester in which you have a graduate assistantship, the minimum enrollment is one credit. **PLEASE NOTE: YOU MUST CONTACT THE GRADUATE SECRETARY PRIOR TO THE BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER YOU DEFEND (and have a Graduate Assistantship) TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR LESS THAN 6 CREDITS (Master's) or LESS THAN 3 CREDITS (Doctoral).**

*I'm in the doctoral program and I'm writing my dissertation. I've already taken 24 credits of GEO 999. Can I quit registering for credits now?*

No. Remember that the University requires that you register for at least one credit for every Fall and Spring semester from the time that you are a doctoral candidate until you defend your dissertation in order to be considered a full time student. This is called 'continuing enrollment.' The Graduate School allows you to skip enrolling for three consecutive semesters (say, Fall, Spring, Summer) to do fieldwork. However, if you skip enrolling for more than three semesters, *you have to apply for re-admission*. Also, do not forget that you have to be registered for at least one credit in order to take your comprehensive exams, or defend your proposal, thesis or dissertation.

*A 'full time' student in graduate school usually takes 6-9 credits each semester. Does that change once I am a doctoral candidate and I'm not taking regular courses?*

Yes. After you pass your comprehensive exams (including the written exam and its oral defense) as well as your dissertation proposal and its defense, OR if you are doing approved off-campus dissertation



related fieldwork, the University considers that you are 'full time' if you register for a minimum of 1 credit of 999 each Fall and Spring semester.

***Why does 'full time status' matter?***

Some students wish to be classified officially by the University as a "full time student" because of their student loans, employment status, or some other reason. Be aware that your financial institution may have other criteria for being a 'full time student.' The University also requires that graduate students register for at least one credit (usually 999) each semester between the time they become a doctoral candidate and the time that they defend the dissertation. The university allows only three consecutive semesters of non-enrollment during this time, e.g., you might be out of state or out of the country doing fieldwork at some point. If you are not enrolled for more than three consecutive semesters (Fall or Spring or Summer), you must re-apply for admission to the Graduate School.

***What does it mean to be a 'resident' for the University residency requirement?***

Residency means that you are "here on campus," using the library, interacting with faculty, and using the University facilities and so forth. The University requires one year of residency on campus after your first enrollment for doctoral credit. The University defines a year as two consecutive semesters, with 6 credits of graduate work each semester. Summer semester counts as a semester in this context. Notice that this 'year' is defined as occurring after your first enrollment for doctoral credit. Remember that the 24 required credits of GEO 999 count for doctoral credit. The University also allows some work to be done 'in absentia,' that means that you'd be a registered student but you are not physically present at the University. You must obtain the consent of your Guidance Committee to do any of your work in absentia.

***What is a CIC scholar?***

The CIC is the Committee on Institutional Cooperation, a group of Midwestern universities (the Big Ten universities plus the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois at Chicago). CIC Traveling Scholars are doctoral students (students who have been admitted to the doctoral program) who have applied and been accepted as a CIC scholar. The Traveling Scholar Program enables doctoral students at any CIC university to take advantage of educational opportunities--specialized courses, unique library collections, laboratories--at any other CIC university without change in registration or increase in tuition. See the CIC Scholar website at

<http://www.cic.net/Home/Projects/SharedCourses/TScholar/Introduction.aspx>

First-year students may not be CIC scholars.

***Can I count credits accumulated at another University toward my MSU graduate degree in Geography?***

Yes, but only 9 at the Master's level (unlimited at the PhD level) and then only if they were NOT counted toward another degree program, and with approval of your MSU Guidance Committee. The only credits that can transfer are those earned in another degree program but not used to graduate, or those earned in a non degree-seeking degree. And of course, the credits must be at the graduate (400-level MSU equivalent) level to count.

***What date do I have to drop a class and still get a 100% refund?***

You have until the fourth week of class (during Fall and Spring Semesters) to drop a class and still get a 100% refund. If you have an assistantship and go beyond the fourth week of class and then drop the class you will be billed for the class. If you add credits beyond the fourth week and still have some of your 9 credits covered under your assistantship, you will be billed for those credits. The important thing to remember is to make any changes to your program within the first four weeks of class.

***How many 'lifelong education' credits can I transfer into a degree program?***

Up to nine (9) credits can be transferred from Lifelong Education to a regular Geography degree program with approval of your Guidance Committee.



***What is VU and how can I obtain an instructorship?***

VU is the shorthand we use for Virtual University (i.e. online) courses the department offers during all sessions of the school year. During the regular Academic Year (Fall and Spring Semesters) some TA appointments are VU instructorships. During the Summer Semester (two 7-week intensive sessions) the department offers many online sections and these offer additional teaching opportunities for qualified graduate students since all of these course sections are run by graduate instructors and are overseen by the Virtual Course Coordinators and a faculty member in the Geography Department. Selection is competitive and foreign students must meet TOEFL and SPEAK score levels for regular TA appointments. A call for instructors is made early in the Spring Semester; selection and training occur mid semester.

***What does a grade of 'DF' in my grade report mean?***

A grade of 'DF' indicates the grade has been deferred, which can occur for a number of reasons.

***How long can a grade remain deferred ('DF') on my transcript?***

All required work for a DF grade must be completed and a grade reported within six months with the option of a single six-month extension. If the work required to attain a final grade is not completed within the time limit, the DF grade will become U-Unfinished and will be changed to DF/U under the numerical and Pass-No Grade (P-N) grading systems, and to DF/NC under the Credit-No Credit (CR-NC) system. **NOTE** this rule *does not apply to graduate thesis or dissertation credits* as the DF grade is changed upon completion of the degree.

***How long do I have to complete a course in which I received an 'I' (Incomplete) grade?***

The required work for an Incomplete grade ('I') must be completed, and a grade must be reported to the Office of the Registrar, no later than the *middle of the student's next semester in attendance* (summer session excluded). Failure to complete the required work by the due date will result in an **automatic** grade of I/0.0 or I/N depending on the grading system under which the student was enrolled. Therefore Incomplete grades should be completed AS SOON AS POSSIBLE and avoided as much as possible.

***I am an out-of-state graduate student and received an externally funded fellowship, is it possible to receive in-state tuition rates?***

Receipt of externally funded fellowships by students who have written their own grant applications and with a value of at least \$20,000 (direct costs) renders a student eligible for in-state tuition rates. The in-state tuition rate applies only to the semesters during which the student is supported by the fellowship. This policy applies only to grants funded through a competitive process by a U.S. institution/agency/foundation. Funds obtained through non-competitive processes (e.g., need-based fellowships) or from international sources do not qualify a student for in-state tuition rates.

***I think I might need to defend my thesis or take my comps in the Summer; do I have to register for classes?***

Students who were enrolled in the Spring and are defending their Master's thesis or Ph.D. comps during the immediate Summer semester *may* be provided with a waiver if the department requests one from the Graduate School. For this waiver to be granted the request *must be made by the department* and be endorsed by both the department and College of Social Science. Please see the Graduate Secretary if you believe you may need a waiver.