

**GRADUATE
HANDBOOK**

Department of Geography



OHIO
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Introduction

The Department of Geography has prepared this convenient handbook to assist you in completing your master's program in geography, and to communicate major policies and procedures that affect our graduate students. Much information is also available elsewhere on the department's webpage (www.ohio.edu/cas/geography/). Thoroughly familiarize yourself with this handbook's contents and the department's webpage, and refer to both as questions arise. If you need further assistance, do not hesitate to consult the graduate committee chair or your advisor. You should also read the section about the geography program in the current OU graduate catalog (<https://www.catalogs.ohio.edu/>). For guidance on what is expected of you as a member of the Ohio University community, review the student code of conduct, including information regarding academic misconduct, found online at the Division of Student Affairs, Department of Community Standards (www.ohio.edu/communitystandards/academic/students.cfm).

The Department of Geography offers several possible specialties at the graduate level, leading to diverse career paths in the public, non-profit, and private sectors. Below are important areas of specialization within the department:

Cultural-Political Ecology
Cultural-Historical Geography
Biogeography
Geomorphology
Urban Geography
Agriculture and Food Resources

Economic Development/Globalization
Geographical Techniques (GIS, cartography)
Climatology and Meteorology
Environmental and Sustainability Planning
Sustainable Resource Management
Gender and Development

The professional placements of recent graduates of our program can be viewed here:
<https://www.ohio.edu/cas/geography/about/recent-masters>.

The geography master's program typically requires two years (four semesters) to complete and consists of coursework as well as researching and writing a thesis under faculty supervision. Graduate students receive credit only for classes at the **5000 level or higher**; courses at the 4000 level or lower are not graduate level.

Advising

Individual welcome interviews for new graduate students and a group orientation for all geography graduate students and faculty take place just prior to fall semester, usually on the Friday before classes start. Welcome interviews acquaint the graduate committee with our new students and serve as each student's initial advising session for developing a program of study. During the welcome interview you will be assigned an interim academic advisor. This faculty member will be your **temporary advisor** until you arrange for a faculty member to supervise your thesis; your thesis advisor will then serve as your academic advisor. Your academic advisor, whether interim or permanent, helps you select courses, plan your program of study, assess options, and strategize on handling any academic deficiencies noted in the welcome interview. Your academic advisor is available to answer your questions and offer academic advice.

Your choice of a thesis advisor should be the outcome of discussions with individual geography professors whose research interests dovetail with yours. Once you have identified a faculty member you would like as your supervisor, you must ask if they would agree to assume the responsibilities of serving in that capacity. The thesis advisor should specialize or have expertise in the systematic geographic subfield, method, or technique that will be the focus of your thesis. If, after identifying a permanent advisor, your primary research interests change substantially such that they might be represented better by a different professor, it may be possible to change advisors.

Program of Study

The department offers a Master of Arts (MA) and a Master of Science (MS) degree in geography. Table 1 lists the course and credit hour requirements for the two degrees. Please note alternative requirements for non-thesis practicum and capstone project options.

TABLE 1. Geography MA and MS Course Requirements

Total Credit Hours: 40 hours minimum to consist of the following:

- **Thesis or Independent Study hours (12 credit hours min.):**

GEOG 6950	Thesis (Thesis students)
GEOG 6930	Independent Study (Non-thesis students)

- **One required course (4 credit hours):**

GEOG 5000	Geographic Research and Writing
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- **One method/technique course from the following list (4 credit hours):**

GEOG 5600	Cartography I
GEOG 5610	Cartography II
GEOG 5650	Air Photo Interpretation
GEOG 5660	Remote Sensing
GEOG 5670	Advanced Remote Sensing
GEOG 5710	Quantitative Methods
GEOG 5711	Qualitative Methods in Geography
GEOG 5712	Field Methods
GEOG 5730	Principles of GIS
GEOG 5740	GIS Design & Application Development
GEOG 5750	GIS & Landscape Analysis
GEOG 5760	Geographic Information Analysis

- **Two seminars (min. 8 credit hours):** [With permission, one seminar can be from outside Geography]

For the MS degree select at least one of the two seminars from:

GEOG 6010	Seminar in Atmospheric Science
GEOG 6150	Seminar in Geomorphology
GEOG 6160	Seminar in Biogeography
GEOG 6660	Seminar in Cartography
GEOG 6730	Seminar in GIScience

- **Other graduate-level courses (min. 12 hours for thesis and practicum students; min. 20 hours for capstone project students):** [With permission, one course can be from outside Geography]

GEOG 5030, 5040, 5910, 5911, 6930, 6950, OPIE, & AGC courses do not count

For the MS degree select at minimum of two of these GEOG courses if pursuing a thesis or practicum project; select a minimum of three of these courses if pursuing the capstone project:

5010 Meteorology	5580 Environmental Hazards
5020 Climatology	5600 Cartography I
5060 Synoptic Meteorology	5610 Cartography II
5070 Mesoscale Meteorology	5650 Air Photo Interpretation
5080 Dynamic Meteorology I	5660 Principles of Remote Sensing
5090 Dynamic Meteorology II	5670 Advanced Remote Sensing
5050 Physical Meteorology	5710 Quantitative Methods
5110 Advanced Physical Geog.	5712 Field Methods in Geography
5130 Arid Lands Physical Geog.	5730 Principles of GIS
5150 Landforms & Landscapes	5740 GIS Design & Application Development
5160 Biogeography	5750 GIS & Landscape Analysis
5170 Landscape Ecology	5760 Geographic Information Analysis
5530 Env. Planning & Assessment	

Credit Hour and Course Requirements

Students must complete a minimum of **40 hours** of graduate credit, consisting of at least 12 hours of thesis credit and 28 credit hours of courses. The 28 credit hours count includes required courses, seminars, and the other approved graduate courses selected by the student. At 4 credit hours per course, this is seven courses. At least five of these courses must be offered in the Department of Geography. Hours in GEOG 5030, 5040, 5910, 5911, 6930, and 6950 are excluded from the count toward 40, as are credits from classes in the Ohio University Program in Intensive English (OPIE), Academic and Global Communication (AGC), other language coursework, and any course that you audit. It is your responsibility to know whether a course counts toward the degree or not.

The department requires all students to complete **Geographic Research and Writing (GEOG 5000)**, and to do so in their first fall semester. All students are required to take at least **one method/technique course**, selected in consultation with their advisor. You must complete at least **two graduate seminars** totaling at least 8 hours of credit. Ideally, seminars give you an opportunity to do some preliminary work on a thesis topic or to acquire a deeper understanding of the geographic subfields in which you are most interested. With committee approval, and a record of this in the student's departmental file, one of the two seminars can be taken outside of the department. If possible, seminars should be completed no later than the fall term of your second year. In addition to the seminars, 12 hours of elective coursework are required. For MS students these electives must be selected from a list of physical/environmental or techniques courses. Students who select the capstone research project alternative to the thesis (see **Non-Thesis Options** below) are required to complete 20 hours of elective coursework rather than 12). Lastly, all graduate students must enroll **each semester** in the 1 credit hour **Colloquium in Geography (GEOG 5911)**.

We encourage students to take courses in cognate fields. For example, if you are interested in historical geography, you may wish to take a graduate class in History, or if you are interested in biogeography, you may want to take a relevant course from the Department of Environmental and Plant Biology.

Graduate students who receive a tuition scholarship as part of a financial aid award (e.g., TA, GA, RA, GRS), are expected to enroll in **18 credit hours per semester**. In your first year, this typically consists of three courses (12 credit hours), the one-credit colloquium (GEOG 5911), and five credit hours of thesis research (GEOG 6950) each semester. In the second year, with most of your courses completed, you will enroll in a larger number of thesis credit hours per semester. As a result, by the end of your program, you will have signed up for many more than the minimum required total of 12 credit hours of thesis research.

The Thesis

Thesis research represents an attempt to answer a research question or test a research hypothesis that has some significance to the discipline. The work is conducted under the guidance and mentoring of the student's thesis committee. The written thesis is the culmination of the student's research. It communicates the research problem, its significance, its context within the literature, the methods used to conduct the research, data and results, how the results fit into the larger perspective, and references cited.

Thesis Committee

Your thesis advisory committee (or simply 'thesis committee') is comprised of your thesis advisor (also called your advisor, thesis director, or committee chair) and two other tenured or tenure-track faculty members from the department. Your thesis advisor is chair of your thesis committee and should be determined early in your program, ideally by the middle of your second semester. You may choose to include one additional (a fourth) committee member from outside the department, usually an OU faculty member from the most relevant cognate field. In that case, the optional fourth member of the committee will vote on committee decisions if they are a member of the graduate faculty in their home department. Alternatively, you may select as a fourth committee member an emeritus or a non-tenure track professor in our department to serve in an advisory (non-voting) capacity. In all cases, the optional fourth committee member must have at least a master's degree. Only tenured or tenure-track faculty from the Geography department can serve as a thesis director or as one of the other two main members of your thesis committee. Each student must successfully defend the thesis proposal, and later the final thesis, in front of this committee and must satisfactorily complete revisions to the thesis as specified and reviewed by the committee or thesis advisor. It is expected that the members of the thesis committee remain the same from proposal to thesis defense, but substitutions may be made under exceptional circumstances.

Thesis Proposal

Students should plan to defend a thesis proposal by the end of the second semester of their program in order to allow sufficient time to conduct thesis research. If a defense during the student's second term is not possible, students may use the break after their second semester to prepare for a proposal defense early in their third semester. Students must have their thesis proposal defended **no later than the end of the 5th week of their third semester**. Submit the signed Thesis Proposal Defense form (<https://www.ohio.edu/cas/geography/graduate/resources>) to the Graduate Chair when the committee approves this proposal.

You are expected to follow the instructions of your advisor as to the content and length of your thesis proposal, but most proposals are 15-20 pages long and include an introduction, review of literature, statement of a research question(s) or research hypothesis, methodology, discussion of the significance of the research, time table, and references cited. Once a proposal meets the advisor's approval it is distributed to each committee member **at least one week** prior to the scheduled proposal defense meeting.

The Written Thesis

Like the proposal, the thesis is written with the advice and guidance of the advisor. The thesis defense occurs only after the advisor has approved the thesis and agrees that it may be distributed to the thesis committee. The thesis must be given to committee members **at least one week** prior to the thesis defense.

Virtually all students have some revisions to make to their thesis after the defense. Once the revisions are completed and the committee has given final approval to the thesis, you must submit an electronic copy of it to the Thesis and Dissertation (TAD) Services office of the Graduate College. Your advisor or the Graduate Chair then submits the signed thesis defense form to the College of Arts and Sciences. Formatting, submission, deadlines for the current academic year, and other guidelines for the thesis are posted on the TAD Services part of the [Graduate College webpage](#).

Proposal and Thesis Defenses

When your advisor agrees that your proposal or thesis is ready to be circulated to your committee and defended, you can schedule your defense for a time that is acceptable to your committee. Every attempt should be made to schedule defenses during the fall or spring semester. Faculty members may not be available for defenses during summer, other break periods, or holidays. The defending student is responsible for arranging a time and room for each defense. Scheduling a two-hour block of time is recommended, especially for the thesis defense. Consult with your thesis advisor to reserve an appropriate space for the proposal and thesis defense. Once your thesis defense is scheduled, prepare a flyer that lists your name, thesis title, a photo or illustration relevant to your thesis topic, and the date, time, and location of the defense. Post these around the department to notify the rest of the OU Geography community about the thesis defense and share the flyer with the Graduate Chair for circulation to faculty. Share the [Arrangement for the Oral Thesis Defense form](#) with your thesis advisor when you have your day/time arranged.

Both the proposal defense and the thesis defense begin with an approximately 20-minute presentation in which the student summarizes the essential aspects of the proposed or completed study. The committee members and other interested faculty and graduate students attend the presentation. After questions from the general audience, the advisor excuses the general audience to begin the part of the defense reserved for the student and committee alone. Unanimous approval by the voting members of the committee is required to pass a proposal or thesis defense. With additional preparation as directed by the student's advisory committee, a proposal or thesis that was not successfully defended can be redefended for possible approval.

Be sure to take the required Report on the Oral Thesis Examination form, part of which you fill out, to both the proposal and the thesis defenses. The forms are available from the Department of Geography's Geography Graduate Courses & Resources page (<https://www.ohio.edu/cas/geography/graduate/resources>). Your committee chair will keep the signed form until the committee is satisfied with the final, revised version of the thesis.

Non-Thesis Options

Non-thesis projects are problem-focused and contribute original analysis of a question or questions derived from the academic literature in a sub-field of geography. Students develop non-thesis project ideas under an advisor's guidance. While projects may take different forms depending on the area of specialization, faculty committees ensure that non-thesis projects meet the general criteria established by the department. In most cases, graduate students will make a choice early in their programs regarding their culminating project. Non-thesis students will take research or project credits beginning in the second semester of their program and should complete a proposal before the end of the second semester.

Non-Thesis Option 1: Geography Practicum

The practicum option is organized around a professional or research engagement pursued in collaboration with a community, government, or private sector partner organization. Students take primary responsibility for identifying the partner organization, though faculty may be able to facilitate connections with partner organizations in some cases.

Students pursuing the practicum develop a proposal consisting of an annotated bibliography and a proposed set of activities and deliverables associated with their practicum experience. The development of specific practicum objectives and deliverables is an important part of the project development process. Proposed activities, analyses, and deliverables for the practicum must be clearly linked to questions derived from geography scholarship as well as the partner organization's need for evidence-based assessment and solutions. A completed project entails specific deliverables for the partner organization as well as a substantive project report on this work appended to an annotated bibliography, thereby fulfilling the written requirement.

The practicum project committee consists of a practicum faculty advisor, two additional faculty members, and a Representative from the partner organization. Following an oral presentation and submission of a written

project, the committee evaluates the written work, requests revisions to the document, and makes a decision to pass or fail the project. The non-faculty committee member serves in a non-voting advisory role to the committee chair to ensure that the partner organization believes that the student has met expectations as established in the practicum proposal.

Non-Thesis Option 2: Capstone Research Project

The capstone research project entails original research that is grounded in contemporary geography scholarship and demonstrates mastery of geographic methods or techniques. The format for many projects will encompass the major components of a thesis, though the scope of the capstone research project is narrower than that which would be required for a thesis project. Capstone projects may entail novel analyses of secondary data or systematic reviews of existing research, use of qualitative or quantitative methods and techniques to collect, analyze, and visualize data, or the design and development of new decision-making models and/or software to support geographic analysis.

Some scholarship and creative activities may be best communicated in alternative formats. Alternatives to the standard research paper format must be approved by the committee, ensuring that alternative formats meet the level of scholarly engagement required to demonstrate mastery of sub-field domains.

The capstone research project committee consists of three faculty, two of whom must be from the Department of Geography. Oral proposal and final paper presentations are required, following which the student will undertake revisions suggested by the committee before final approval is granted.

Students choosing the non-thesis capstone research project are required to complete 20 rather than the 12 credit hours of elective courses required of other students. For MS students pursuing the capstone research project option, three of the five required elective courses must be selected from the physical/environmental/geotechniques geography courses listed in Table 1 above.

Registration

Full-time students at Ohio University take between 12 and 18 graduate credit hours per semester. There is no cost differential whatsoever between 12 and 18 graduate credit hours. The department requires all students receiving a graduate assistantship (GA, TA, or RA) or a Graduate Recruitment Scholarship (GRS) to enroll in **18 graduate credit hours per semester**. This applies to students supported by the department or by other units at the university. A course load of more than 18 credit hours is considered an overload by the Graduate College. An overload requires special permission from the college and incurs additional tuition costs that are not covered by financial aid, for which the student is responsible.

Graduate student tuition and fees must be paid within 30 days of registration. Students on assistantships or scholarships should be aware that registering early for the next term could mean that payment will be due before receipt of their first stipend payment for that term. Be sure to plan accordingly.

Grades and Standing in the Program

Students are accepted into the program because they possess the interests, skills, and work ethic to complete their degree in a timely manner. We are confident that you will perform well in your classes and achieve high grades. However, you should be aware of the following guidelines for graduate-level academic expectations.

GPA Requirement

Ohio University operates on a plus/minus grading system, e.g., A (4.00), A- (3.67), B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), etc. Unconditional admission into the program requires an undergraduate grade point average (gpa) of 3.00 (B) or higher, or compensating evidence of the ability to perform at the graduate level. To remain in good standing in the program you must maintain this level of performance as a minimum. If your overall gpa

drops below 3.00, you will be placed on academic probation immediately. At that time, you will have one semester (or the equivalent of 12 graduate credit hours) to raise your overall average to the 3.00 mark. Students on academic probation cannot receive any financial aid from Ohio University.

The lowest acceptable grade in a graduate course is a C. However, any student receiving more than one grade of C (at any time in his or her course of study) may be dropped from the program. In such a case, a formal meeting with the student and the graduate committee will be held to discuss the grades and the prospect of removal. Students must earn at least a B (3.00) in the required course (GEOG 5000) in order to receive credit for it, otherwise he or she must repeat the course and earn a grade of B (3.00) or better. A student who receives a grade lower than a C (2.00) in any course can be dropped from the program at the discretion of the graduate committee. If the student is allowed to remain in the program with a grade of less than C (2.00), the course and the hours in which the grade below C (2.00) were earned will not count toward the credit hour requirement for the degree.

Annual Review

At the end of spring semester, the graduate committee will conduct a review of your performance thus far in the program. The purpose of this review is to verify that you are making satisfactory progress toward the completion of your degree and that you are on track to fulfill all the requirements of the program on time. Working with your advisor, the graduate committee will:

- Examine your grade report, paying particular attention to courses completed and your GPA
- Identify course grades below B (3.00), as well as Incomplete (I) and Progress (PR) grades (indicating that course requirements have not been completed)
- Seek comments and recommendations from your advisor regarding your ability to complete the degree
- Request a timetable for completing I or PR grades, if any were noted

Students making adequate progress toward the degree are considered in good standing. Following the annual review by the graduate committee, any student found not to be in good standing will receive a letter to that effect from the graduate chair. Students receiving an assistantship or Graduate Recruitment Scholarship who are judged not to be in good standing will lose financial support. Students not in good standing may be terminated from the program on the advice of the graduate committee.

Graduation

OU students must **apply for graduation** online via their MyOHIO portal **early in the term** in which they expect to graduate. The deadline to apply for graduation occurs approximately one month into the semester. If you are not able to complete the requirements for graduation as planned, the application for graduation must be renewed online (for a small fee) for a subsequent term.

Ohio University [Academic Policies and Procedures](#) stipulate that students must be registered for a minimum of 0.5 hours of graduate credit in any semester in which they receive any service from the University, use its facilities, or graduate. Individual degree programs may set higher minimum registration thresholds for certain services or uses.

The only exception to minimum enrollment is that you do not have to register for your graduation term if you meet the following conditions prior to the start of the first day of classes in the term you will officially graduate:

1. You were enrolled for at least one credit hour in the term prior to your graduation term,
2. You have completed all required coursework and have no incomplete grades, and
3. You have completed all final projects and/or completed all required parts of the thesis or dissertation process by the posted deadlines.

Students who were not registered at Ohio University in the term before they intend to apply for graduation must submit [a request for reenrollment](#).

Please note that the Commencement is optional and is a ceremonial occasion at which to celebrate your degree but does not indicate formal approval of your graduation. Students who are on track to complete all of their degree requirements during summer semester are welcome to participate in the Spring commencement.

Financial Assistance and Fees

The Department of Geography offers financial assistance in the form of Graduate Recruitment Scholarships and graduate assistantships. A graduate assistantship is usually designated as a teaching assistantship or a research assistantship. Only students admitted unconditionally may receive financial aid, although not all unconditionally admitted students receive aid. All students on financial assistance are obligated to perform certain duties, discussed below. Students must balance their schedules to meet assistantship, classroom, and personal obligations. Details regarding fees and related financial information can be found on the Bursar's webpage (<https://www.ohio.edu/bursar/graduate-tuition>).

Graduate Recruitment Scholarships

A Graduate Recruitment Scholarship (GRS) covers most of your tuition costs, whether resident or nonresident, for each semester awarded. Part of this funding is received as a stipend and is spread throughout the semester as compensation for assistantship work performed. The student is responsible for applying this stipend to the remaining tuition. Students are also responsible for all other fees (the general fee, technology fee, network fee, and health insurance). Recipients of the scholarship must take at least 18 graduate credit hours and work 5 hours per week for the department during each GRS-funded semester. Examples of assistantship duties for GRS students include grading for large classes or teaching one lab section. Only students who are recruited into the Department of Geography are eligible for this award. Students who have received any other financial assistance from the department are not eligible.

Assistantships

Departmental assistantships are designated as teaching assistantships (TA), graduate assistantships (GA), or research assistantships (RA). These assistantships provide a tuition scholarship, whether resident or nonresident, a subsidy toward health insurance, and a stipend. The student is responsible for all other fees (the general fee, technology fee, and network fee). Recipients of an assistantship must take at least 18 graduate credit hours. The student is obligated to work no more than 20 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters.

A student receiving a teaching/graduate assistantship is expected to contribute to the department's teaching mission in multiple ways. TAs are responsible for such duties as teaching lab or discussion sections, grading exams and assignments, and other forms of assisting classroom instruction. Most TAs/GAs are assigned to work with a specific professor in a specific class for the semester. Professors meet with and provide instructions, materials, and other information to their TAs/GAs. Specific course assignments for TAs/GAs are not made until after the welcome meeting for incoming students in the fall; spring semester TA/GA assignments are usually made a couple of weeks before the start of the new term. At the end of Fall semester, TAs are expected to take part in the assessment of research projects undertaken by undergraduate capstone students with guidance from the department's assessment committee.

A research assistant is obligated to work a maximum of 20 hours per week according to the terms of her or his appointment. RAs generally work with an individual faculty member on a specific grant-funded research project. Funding amounts for grant-supported Ras can vary with the position because they are dependent on the terms and amounts of the faculty grants.

If you feel you are being asked to perform tasks beyond what is reasonable to expect given your graduate appointment, contact the graduate chair, department chair, your advisor, or university authorities, such as the Office of [University Equity and Civil Rights Compliance](#).

Work Performance and Renewal of Financial Aid

Financial aid is not automatically renewed for the second year but will be determined when the annual performance review is completed. Unless there are performance problems, the normal expectation is to continue aid for the second year, pending budget support. Failure to complete assigned assistantship tasks may result in non-renewal of assistantship or scholarship funding in the next semester. If a student leaves the university without finishing required work assignments, their pay will be adjusted according to the amount of work completed.

Code of Conduct

All graduate students need to pay close attention to university regulations and procedures, especially regarding the Student Code of Conduct, rights to privacy, and sexual harassment. Information on the [Student Code of Conduct](#) is found online. Teaching assistants in particular need to maintain a sense of professionalism and adhere to the university's privacy policies regarding students' personal information. Among other things, this includes maintaining the confidentiality of any student's health issues, disability status, and grades, whether for a course, lab, or assignment.

Personal Relationships, Sexual Misconduct, and Reporting Processes

Personal relationships with faculty, or with students who you supervise, should not occur. According to the university's statement on sexual misconduct, "consensual romantic or sexual relationships in which one party retains a direct supervisory or evaluative role over the other party are unethical, create a risk for real or perceived coercion, and are expressly a violation of this policy." Such interactions can compromise your ability to teach or learn effectively, participate fully in our program, and realize your professional goals. You should read the [university's policy on sexual misconduct](#) in full.

With the exception of the confidential resources named below, **all faculty and staff (including Teaching Assistants) of Ohio University are obligated to report complaints of sexual misconduct or behavior** they observe and believe to be sexual misconduct to the [Office of Equity and Civil Rights Compliance \(ECRC\)](#). A staff member from ECRC will then contact the survivor to inform them of the resources and options available to them through the University. For a full explanation of the rights a survivor has through this process (including the right to request alternate housing or academic arrangements, and information regarding amnesty for personal alcohol or drug use at the time the sexual misconduct occurred) please see our [Sexual Harassment and Other Sexual Misconduct Grievance Process](#).

A list of confidential resources, meaning they are exempt from reporting complaints of sexual misconduct to the Office Equity and Civil Rights Compliance, can be found on [ECRC's Resources page](#).

Academic Honesty, Plagiarism, and the Use of Artificial Intelligence

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating on exams, falsifying information) are unacceptable forms of behavior for graduate students as well as undergraduate students. When a faculty member judges that plagiarism or academic dishonesty has taken place, action will be taken against the student or students committing the offense. Additional action by the graduate committee is possible. Academic misconduct may result in failing an assignment or course, referral to the OU Office of Community Standards and Student Responsibility, and the possibility of being dropped from the program. For more information on what constitutes academic misconduct, refer to the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

The Code of Conduct defines plagiarism as follows:

"Plagiarism: Using another's work, in whole or in part, without acknowledging the source and presenting that material as one's own academic work. This includes, but is not limited to:

- i. Reproducing another person's work, whether published or unpublished (this also includes using materials from companies that sell research papers)
- ii. Using another's ideas or written words without properly acknowledging the source.

- iii. Quoting a source word for word without providing quotation marks and citations.
- iv. Copying words or ideas from a source without appropriate citations.
- v. Submitting work that is substantially identical to another source in content and/or organization without appropriately citing the source.
- vi. Using other intellectual property in a work without appropriate citations, permissions, or rights (when applicable). Intellectual property includes but is not limited to images, videos, software programs, computer code, or pieces of music.”

Graduate students in our program are required to engage deeply in reading, evaluating, synthesizing and contributing to scholarship in their fields of specialization. Graduate education requires students to learn to more *critically engage with* contemporary geographic scholarship. This engagement requires that students develop the skills that enable them to search for and identify relevant sources, synthesize these materials, and evaluate geographic trends. It requires that students learn to draw on and further develop their own creativity in forming new research questions that extend existing knowledge. Artificial Intelligence (AI)¹ should not be used to undermine or bypass traditional learning processes that have long been known to ensure individual intellectual development. Use of generative AI technologies (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini) is permissible only for background research and narrowing down the scope of topics. Under no circumstance should generative AI technologies be used for generating or altering content for any type of deliverable for which the student will be assessed for originality and/or earn academic credit. Examples of such deliverables include, but are not limited to maps or other geovisual products, essays, papers, theses and other written assignments.

Although AI will increasingly be incorporated into geographic research methodologies as the technology evolves, the use of AI to generate any type of content that is passed off as original work by a student is not permitted. Any student who submits AI-generated material as though it were their original creation in order to satisfy coursework, thesis, project, or practicum requirements is in violation of the Student Code of Conduct. Furthermore, the use of AI for analysis (e.g., to synthesize key points from academic literature) must be clearly acknowledged by the student and explicitly approved by the course instructor or evaluated and approved as a formal part of a research methodology by members of a project, practicum or thesis committee. AI technology cannot be cited as a source of ideas and prior knowledge; all citations must include the human originators. Additionally, students must comply with all university-wide policies, guidelines, and regulations governing the use of AI technology.

Any unauthorized or unethical use of AI to satisfy coursework, thesis, capstone, or practicum requirements will be reported to the university judiciary for investigation as academic misconduct, and subject to consequences, such as failing the assignment, failing the course, or further disciplinary action depending on the scope and severity of the actions taken. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please consult your instructor, academic advisor, and/or the graduate chair. When a student is accused and judged guilty of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, they may follow the established appeal process. For more information, contact the department chair and consult the information available online at the [Office of Community Standards and Student Responsibility](#).

Departmental Operational Policies and Procedures

News, Information, and Email

Announcements and other important information on such matters as departmental events, colloquia, visiting faculty, visiting prospective graduate students, or special opportunities are sent out over the **Geography graduate student listserv** via OU email. Much information about the department and graduate program, including the proposal and thesis defense forms, appears on the department’s webpage. It is your responsibility to review these sources periodically for information and general communications in order to remain informed.

Dr. Sinha manages the **Geog Jobs listserv**, which sends out announcements relating to geography internships

¹ Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems and programs designed to mimic cognitive functions to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making.

and job opportunities, both undergraduate and graduate. Contact Dr. Sinha (sinhag@ohio.edu) if you would like to join the Geog Jobs listserv.

You are expected to **use the email account supplied by the university** as your primary email account for all official departmental, college, and university communication. Facebook, Twitter, and other means of electronic communication are not appropriate for departmental or university business. This is particularly important for graduate students with teaching responsibilities.

Graduate Office Space and Desktop Computers

Teaching assistants (TAs) have priority for the desks in the graduate student office. The chair of the graduate committee determines desk assignment priority and makes all final desk assignments. Typically, most, if not all, graduate students are able to have a desk in the department. It is usually possible for the department to supply a relatively recent desktop computer for your desk, if you request one.

Keys and Mailboxes

Keys to the building, to the graduate student offices, and to your assigned desk in a graduate student office are available from the departmental chair. You are permitted to access the department during evenings and weekends. No deposit is required, but the keys must be returned at the time of graduation for the department to finalize the degree process. These keys are your responsibility and are not to be loaned out to anyone. If you lose these keys, you may be charged a replacement fee.

All graduate students have a physical mailbox in the department's copy room. These boxes are for professional, university, college, and departmental mail, and not for personal business or private communications.

Photocopying and Printing

Teaching assistants may use the departmental printer/photocopy machine to copy materials directly related to their teaching responsibilities. Please be conservative in your use of paper, such as by making double-sided copies, as much as possible. **You are not permitted to use this machine for a class you are taking or for personal copies.**

Graduate students may use the printer in the main copy room for printing/copying related to your TA assignment. Computers in the graduate student offices have networked access to that copier/printer. Each graduate student may copy/print up to 500 black/white pages each semester on that printer free of charge. Any changes in the maximum number of pages will be announced via the graduate student listserv.

Departmental Office

Personnel in the departmental office are available to assist graduate students, but the requests should be for official purposes and related to departmental duties.

Service and Participation Opportunities

Taking on a service position, representing graduate student interests, and participating in departmental student organizations are great ways to get to know the department, faculty, and other students better and to contribute to the departmental community. The department currently has three service positions for graduate students and three student organizations.

Graduate Student Departmental Representative

The graduate representative acts as a liaison between the geography graduate students and the departmental administration. The graduate representative can bring student concerns and ideas to the department chair, the graduate chair, or the geography faculty, as appropriate, and communicate information, opportunities, and concerns from the department chair, graduate chair, or geography faculty to geography graduate students. Nominations, including self-nominations, are accepted by the graduate chair, who supervises the election near

the end of spring semester for the subsequent year, thus the position is typically held by a second-year student. If only one person expresses interest in the position, they are considered elected by consensus. The representative assists with the departmental orientation day for fall semester and may communicate over summer with incoming students. The representative can help coordinate information on graduate student travel plans to conferences (e.g., the AAG) and convey travel and research funding opportunities, policies, and procedures to students. Other tasks might include helping to organize graduate student interaction with visiting or prospective faculty and prospective graduate students, preparation for colloquia, and serving as geography's alternate representative to the Graduate Student Senate.

Graduate Student Senate Representative

Early in fall semester, geography graduate students elect their representative to the Graduate Student Senate (GSS; <https://www.ohio.edu/graduate-student-senate>). The election process is overseen by the graduate chair who solicits nominations for the position, including self-nominations. If only one graduate student expresses interest in the position they are considered elected by consensus. The GSS representative participates in GSS meetings, communicates information, opportunities, and concerns of the GSS to the geography graduate students, and those of the geography graduate students to GSS.

Graduate Student Member of the Colloquium Committee

The colloquium committee arranges for guest speakers to come to the department and present a geographically relevant aspect of their research. The committee helps host the speakers, advertises the colloquia to other interested departments, and considers possible speakers for the future. A volunteer for this position is sought early in the fall semester, with preference to a first-year student.

Graduate Student Social Media Coordinator

This individual makes suggestions to the department's media and communications committee for the graduate content of the department's webpage, helps keep the department's Facebook page and social media presence up-to-date, and helps generate ideas, photos, and text regarding current graduate students for our annual departmental newsletter, the *Geogram*, which typically appears in winter. Volunteers for this position are sought early in fall semester, although suggestions by any of our students are always appreciated.

Geography-Sponsored Student Associations

The department currently has three active student associations, the Geography Club, the OU Chapter of the American Meteorology Society (OUCAMS), and the OU Chapter of Gamma Theta Upsilon (GTU), which is an international geography honor society. Participation in the Geography Club is open to anyone at OU who is interested in geography. Membership in OUCAMS is open to undergraduate and graduate students who are interested in meteorology or climatology. As an honor society, GTU has specific academic requirements for membership, with new members inducted each spring. The Geography Club and GTU meet together because they share the same service and activity goals. The Geography Club/GTU and OUCAMS each have regularly scheduled weekly meetings during the fall and spring semesters, and occasionally have joint meetings or activities. Graduate students are welcome and encouraged to participate in these associations.

Travel Funds and Research Awards

The department encourages graduate students to participate in professional conferences, showcase their research at the annual Ohio University Student Research Expo (held each spring), and seek funding for their research expenses. In addition to departmental sources of research funding discussed below, the university offers Student Enhancement Awards, Graduate College-Graduate Student Senate Original Work Grant, and Travel Program (<https://www.ohio.edu/graduate/funding/financial-support>). Links to these can also be found on the department's Geography Scholarships & Financial Aid webpage. Most professional organizations and associations, and many other sources external to the university, offer grants or awards to help graduate students with research or travel costs. Relevant funding sources vary depending on the research topic. You should consult your advisor for suggestions.

College of Arts and Sciences Funding for Conference Travel

The department encourages graduate students to attend and participate in conferences relevant to their geographical interests. Conferences provide invaluable opportunities to meet people with similar interests and to learn about the latest research results and directions. Most faculty members and several students typically attend the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) or the American Meteorological Society (AMS), and some attend regional or specialty conferences as well.

To encourage and support you in this important professional activity, the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) invites requests for conference travel funding during the academic year. The department's Graduate Chair will notify you of deadlines to request funding during Fall and Spring semesters. The annual maximum amount of conference travel funds that a student can receive from CAS is currently \$500. Students are typically required to have a presenting role in the conference in order to receive funding.

Isaac Sindiga Memorial Fund for Geography

This fund was established in honor of Dr. Isaac Sindiga, who received his master's degree from the department in 1981. The Sindiga Award is given annually (if there are qualified applicants) to one or more graduate students in support of direct costs of conducting thesis research. The research must include some element of travel or fieldwork as well as research expenses that would otherwise be out-of-pocket. To be considered for the award, students must (1) have completed two semesters of full-time graduate coursework toward their OU geography master's degree, (2) have approval of the project by their thesis committee, and (3) submit their application to the graduate chair by the designated due date, typically in early June. Application materials consist of a brief (maximum three-page, double-spaced) synopsis of the project indicating the research purpose (what & where), the rationale (why), and the plan for accomplishing the research (how & when). An additional page, if needed, can be used to provide the project budget, detailing estimated expenses for conducting the research and listing any other funding received or applied for to help cover those out-of-pocket expenses. Finally, the applicant's thesis advisor must submit a letter of recommendation to the graduate chair by the application due date. The graduate committee makes award decisions based on the merits of the proposed research, quality of the proposal, endorsement of the advisor, and the student's academic performance in the program to date. Students cannot receive a Sindiga award more than once.

Geofest and Achievement Awards

Near the end of each spring semester, the department hosts a banquet, called Geofest, to congratulate all our graduating students and to celebrate and recognize student achievements for the academic year. Graduate student awards for outstanding teaching assistance and for outstanding scholarship are presented.

The College of Arts and Sciences and the Department of Geography each give an award to recognize an outstanding teaching assistant. The two awards are given to different students and are of equal significance. All TAs are eligible for the awards, but second-year graduate students tend to receive them because they have a longer track record of TA experience. There is no application process for these awards. The graduate committee selects the recipients based on such criteria as student evaluations and faculty recommendations.

The department recognizes at Geofest an outstanding graduate scholar from the group of second-year (graduating) graduate students. Criteria used by the graduate committee in selecting the recipient include such factors as coursework and gpa, quality and status of completion of the thesis, and solicited comments from supervisors, committee members, and other faculty members.

Upon Completion of your Program

After your final revised thesis has been submitted to the Graduate College, you must complete and submit to the department chair the Exit Survey, which is located at: <https://www.ohio.edu/cas/geography/graduate/resources>. You must also return all keys to the Graduate Chair, and do so **before you leave town**. Finally, we love to hear from our alumni, and encourage you to keep in touch with the department.