

Geography M.S. Program Handbook



Department of Geography, Planning and Environment

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revised January 2024

1. Introduction

A. Purpose

This handbook is a guide to the East Carolina University (ECU) graduate program in geography for graduate students and faculty. It is meant as a supplement to the regulations set forth by the ECU Graduate School (<https://gradschool.ecu.edu/>) and should be used for department-level policies and procedures. Exceptions to the policies described herein can be made in consultation with the department's Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and the student's advisor.

B. A Word of Welcome (and a note of caution)

Welcome to the graduate program in Geography at ECU! We are delighted that you have decided to join us. You are about to embark upon a truly rewarding journey. Over the next two years, you will have many new experiences and discover unique opportunities for intellectual inquiry, camaraderie and personal growth. That does not mean, however, that graduate school will be easy. So, let us begin with a note of caution.

By pursuing a graduate degree, you are entering a new and different phase of your academic career and intellectual development. Graduate study is not simply a continuation of your undergraduate degree but is qualitatively different in several important respects. As a graduate student, you will:

- Begin a transition from being primarily a consumer of knowledge and information to being a producer of knowledge and information. This transition requires new, different, and higher-level skills than you employed as an undergraduate.
- Be more independent. Within the requirements of the M.S. program, you will design your own course of study, academic specialization, and thesis or internship topic. Far more of your time will be spent on primary research and independent scholarly activity than on classroom assignments.
- Play an important and active role in your courses. Many graduate courses are seminars that involve a substantial contribution from all participants and a give and take between faculty and students.
- Read and write more than you ever imagined possible!

The good news is that most students make this transition quite well, and that the faculty and staff of the department are here to assist you. Our goal is not to make your life miserable (although at times we may!); it is to push you to maximize your potential and to give you every opportunity to achieve success. Graduate school will undoubtedly require hard work. But, when you finally hand in that thesis or internship report, you will gain a genuine sense of achievement, and may be justifiably proud of your accomplishments.

C. The “Life of the Mind”

Beyond the formal requirements and coursework, there are numerous opportunities for professional, scholarly, and social enrichment in the ECU geography program. These include guest

speakers from other universities and institutions, professional meetings and conferences, and many informal field trips and social opportunities. These opportunities for learning and networking are an integral part of graduate training and are invaluable for professional development. While we recognize that students have lives and responsibilities beyond ECU, we also expect graduate students to actively contribute to the intellectual climate and scholarly culture of the department. Failure to do so may be a consideration in decisions about financial assistance.

2. Administration of the Graduate Program

The department's DGS manages the geography graduate program. The director, in consultation with the departmental Graduate Committee, generally has decision-making power over admissions, funding, and degree requirements. Students or faculty who wish to appeal a decision of the DGS should see the Department Chair. The Geography DGS also serves as the department's representative to the ECU Graduate School.

3. Curriculum

Specific degree requirements are set forth in the Graduate Catalog for the year of entry into the program. There are two concentrations within the M.S. degree. The Geography Concentration is a typical research-based master's degree and has both thesis and non-thesis options. The Professional Science Master's (PSM) in Geographic Information Science (GIS) is designed to promote workforce development and combines coursework in GIS with electives in an area of GIS application. The PSM has only the non-thesis/internship option.

All Geography Master's Degree students are required to complete 3 courses: GEOG 6100, GEOG 6110, and a research skills course appropriate to the student's chosen methodological approach. The program is designed to lead students to the development of an independent research project (thesis or report). In either case, students begin to identify a potential research subject area in GEOG 6100 in the fall semester of their first year in the program. In the spring semester in GEOG 6110, students develop a formal proposal oriented around specific research questions and a methodology to address them. Students are expected to defend their research proposal before their Thesis or Internship Committee by the end of the spring semester.

A. Thesis and Non-Thesis Options

There are two distinct versions of the M.S. degree: the thesis option and the non-thesis option. The difference between the two options has to do with the nature of the research project required of each. The thesis requires an independent, original research project; the non-thesis option requires an internship report. Students declare which option they will pursue by the beginning of their 2nd semester.

1. Thesis Option

The 'Thesis Option' is the standard option for students who want the opportunity to engage in independent scholarly research on a topic of interest, culminating in the writing of a thesis. The degree requires 30 hours of coursework, including 9 hours of required courses (GEOG 6100 and

6110, and a Research Skills course) and 3 or 6 hours of thesis credit (GEOG 7000).

A typical 2-year program under the Thesis Option:

YEAR 1	YEAR 2
Fall	Fall
GEOG 6100 (History and Philosophy) Elective or Research Skill Elective	Elective Elective or Independent Study GEOG 7000 (Thesis)
Spring	Spring
GEOG 6110 (Research Design) Elective or Research Skill Elective	GEOG 7000 (Thesis) Electives

2. Non-Thesis Option

Also called the ‘Internship Option’, the Non-Thesis Option can be viewed as an applied geography degree and is suited for students who have been or will be engaged in professional practice, or who wish to apply geographic knowledge to the solution of a concrete ‘real-world’ problem. This is accomplished by pursuing an internship in a professional setting.

Students who pursue the non-thesis option are required to identify a suitable internship opportunity, and to specify an applied problem on which to focus their internship experience. This process parallels the thesis proposal process. Students should be aware that some experiences will serve better than others and are advised to begin researching internship opportunities early in their program.

At the conclusion of the internship, students prepare a professional report, which may be written on behalf of a specific client or constituency. The report should specify how the internship experience is related to the geographic literature and how the experience provided insight into the applied research question identified in the proposal. Students must defend their report in front of their committee.

The non-thesis option requires 36 hours of coursework, including 9-hours of required courses (GEOG 6100, GEOG 6110, and a Research Skills course), a 6-hour internship ‘specialization’, and 3-6 hours of internship credit (GEOG 6801, GEOG 6802, and/or GEOG 6803).

A typical 2-year program under the Non-Thesis Option (Geography Concentration):

YEAR 1	YEAR 2
Fall	Fall
GEOG 6100 (History and Philosophy) Elective or Research Skill Elective	Elective Internship Specialization GEOG 6803 (Internship)
Spring	Spring
GEOG 6110 (Research Design) Elective or Research Skill Elective	Elective Internship Specialization Elective or GEOG 6803 (Internship)

B. Professional Science Masters in GIS

The Professional Science Masters concentration allows students to pursue advanced training in geography and geospatial technologies while simultaneously developing professional skills valued by employers. The concentration is modeled on recommendations by the [National Professional Science Master’s Association \(NPSMA\)](#). Degree requirements include 15 hours of coursework in geographic information science and 9 hours of professional skills courses in one of four areas of emphasis. The PSM concentration has only a non-thesis option and requires an internship experience of at least 3 credit hours.

C. Certificates

The department offers two graduate certificates: *Geographic Information Science and Technology (GIST)* and *Development and Environmental Planning*. Students may complete a certificate while pursuing their Master’s degree, or as a separate independent program. Each certificate requires completion of 12 hours of coursework that includes 6 hours of core courses and 6 hours of electives.

Students must apply for the certificate themselves, preferably during their first year in the Master’s degree program. The application is available online on the Graduate School Forms webpage under ‘[Students – Online forms](#)’ and is to be completed electronically. Upon completing the form, the request will move through a series of approvals before reflecting on the student’s Degree Works.

For additional information about degree requirements consult the appropriate graduate catalog.

4. Coursework and Grade Policies

A. Course Schedule

The typical course load is three courses, or 9 hours, per semester. In some cases, 12 or even 15

hours may be taken, although this is generally discouraged. For most purposes, a student is considered full time if they are registered for 9 or more hours in a given semester. An exception is made for thesis students in the fourth semester of their program. *A student registered only for GEOG 7000 is considered by the registrar to be a full-time student.* However, a student must be registered for at least 5 hours to be eligible for financial aid. In addition, a student must be registered for at least 4 hours to avoid FICA taxes. If the program's curriculum requirements have been met, then 3 hours can be considered full-time during the fourth semester of the program if it is the student's graduating (final) semester.

Students must enroll full-time, i.e., 9 hours, during a regular semester (i.e., first three semesters, fall and spring) to qualify for an assistantship. During their fourth semester (final graduating semester), a student may register for 3 hours but must apply for graduation to be eligible for an assistantship. For summer graduation, a student must be enrolled in at least 3 hours during the spring semester prior (and have applied for graduation) to be eligible for a spring semester assistantship and is not required to register for summer course credits. Health insurance requires 3 hours of an on-campus class.

International students on federal visas may have different enrollment requirements each semester and during the fourth semester (final graduating semester) than US based students. If you are an international student, you are encouraged to work with the DGS and the Office of Global Affairs to make sure they are following these requirements.

B. Advising

All course selections must be approved by the student's academic advisor (this is usually the thesis or internship committee chair). The DGS will serve initially as temporary advisor, but students should select a permanent advisor by the end of their first semester. Advisors must be members of the graduate faculty. Students may change their advisor upon mutual agreement between the student, the new advisor, and the DGS.

C. Core Courses

All students must take GEOG 6100 (History and Philosophy of Geography) and GEOG 6110 (Research Design). Together, these courses are designed to provide students with a solid foundation in the philosophical and methodological approaches commonly used in geography, and to facilitate the preparation of a thesis or internship proposal. It is strongly recommended that 6100 be taken prior to 6110.

D. Research Skills Course

Students must complete one 'research skills' course in geography or an allied department. The course must be approved by the student's advisor (or the DGS) and should reflect the methodological approach (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods) to be used in the student's thesis or internship project. In most cases, students pursuing topics in physical geography or GIScience should take GEOG 6150 (Quantitative Methods in Geography) or its equivalent in another department. Students pursuing human geography topics may opt for an appropriate qualitative methods class in geography or another department, if suited to their research design. *Courses in GIScience or other geographic techniques do not fulfill the research skills requirement.*

E. Electives

Elective courses should be chosen in consultation with the student's advisor. Students are encouraged to take one or more courses outside of Geography, and to select courses that combine to form a coherent program of study. Students in the PSM must choose 9 hours of electives in one of four areas of emphasis: logistics, management information systems, marketing, or public administration.

F. Independent Study

An Independent Study is a scholarly exploration of a specified topic, carried out under the direction of a faculty member. A student wishing to undertake an Independent Study must have the instructor complete an [Independent Study Proposal Form](#) available on the college SharePoint site, detailing the scope of work to be pursued and the means of evaluation. Independent Study cannot be used as an alternative to a regular graduate course. Furthermore, Independent Study courses may not normally be counted toward the non-thesis option within the Geography Concentration. *No more than 6 hours of coursework in the form of Independent Studies (GEOG 6291-3, 6391-3, and 6491-3) may count toward the degree without the approval of the DGS.*

G. Thesis and Internship Credit

GEOG 7000 (Thesis) is a required 3-hour course within the Thesis Option. It is designed to provide students with the time necessary to work toward completion of the thesis, generally in the second year. The course may be repeated but a maximum of 6 credits will count toward the degree.

Internship in Geography (GEOG 6801, 6802, and/or 6803) is required for students pursuing the Non-Thesis Option. In combination, internship hours must total a minimum of 3 hours but not more than 6 hours toward the degree. Students must complete 60 hours of internship work for each semester hour of credit received (thus, for 3 credit hours, 180 hours of internship work are needed). Internships are usually completed over the summer months. Students can take GEOG 6803 twice or a combination of GEOG 6801, 6802, and 6803, to get the full 6 credit hours. Students wishing to enroll in Internship credit hours must submit an [Internship Duties Form](#) describing their expected duties to their Internship Committee chair.

Thesis and Internship courses are graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. A grade of 'S' will be assigned by the instructor of record once course requirements have been met, which might include the successful defense of the Thesis or Internship Report.

H. Grade Policies and Incompletes

According to ECU Graduate School Policy, a student must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 once they have 9 hours completed. Failure to record a 3.0 cumulative GPA will initially result in being placed on Academic Probation. The probationary period lasts until the next 9 hours of course credits are completed. Failure to redress the reason for the probation designation will result in termination from the Graduate School.

If a student receives a grade of 'Incomplete or I' for any course, they are given one year to complete the coursework. *After one year any grade of 'I' will automatically become an 'F'.* It is the student's responsibility to ensure that a 'change of grade' form is submitted by the appropriate faculty member once an Incomplete has been resolved.

5. Program Steps and Milestones

Graduate students should adhere to the schedule in Table 1 if they plan to complete the program in two years. Meeting the milestones listed is considered "satisfactory progress" toward completion of the degree. Failure to meet them can jeopardize financial aid. It is the responsibility of the student (not the advisor) to see that any necessary paperwork is completed at the appropriate time.

Note that, according to graduate school policy, any course taken more than six years ago may not count toward a degree. That is, students who do not complete their program in six years will be required to repeat coursework to receive their degree.

A. First Year Milestones

Thesis or Internship Committee

The thesis or internship committee consists of an advisor (the committee chairperson) and two additional members of the ECU graduate faculty. Additional members, formal or informal, may be added to any committee by mutual agreement between the student and their advisor. Individuals external to ECU may serve as an additional member of a committee but may not serve as committee chair.

Thesis or Internship Proposal

All graduate students will develop a written proposal by the end of their first year and give an oral presentation of the proposal to faculty and students. The advisor has discretion over the length and format of the document, but in general the proposal should include a review of the relevant literature, and clearly describe the research questions, theoretical framework, methodology, and expected outcomes of the thesis or internship project. In addition, students should provide a discussion of how the proposed work fits into the theories and philosophies of geography discussed in GEOG 6100.

The *proposal defense* will take place at the end of the student's second semester. As a best practice, copies of the proposal will be distributed to the advisor and committee members no less than two weeks in advance of the oral presentation of the proposal. The student's committee might have different timeline requirements which will take precedence over the one stated here.

The defense will begin with a public presentation by the student of approximately 15 minutes, followed by questions from the audience and then a defense before the committee. The student should submit the Pre-Thesis Research Approval form as soon as possible after the defense (see below). The student's advisor and committee members will confer and vote pass or fail on the proposal.

Successful completion of your thesis or internship proposal defense is required to pass the Research Design course (GEOG 6110). If the outcome of the vote is not unanimous, the student's committee

will decide upon additional requirements. Following the presentation, committee members complete an assessment form and submit to the department administrative staff.

Table 1. Summary and Checklist of Graduate Program Milestones

First semester

- Take GEOG 6100.
- Identify a thesis topic (Thesis option).
- Identify an advisor (can be a different faculty from the one you chose/were assigned when you entered the program).

First or Second Semester

- Take Research Skills course.

Second semester

- Identify suitable internship (Internship option).
- Take GEOG 6110.
- Assemble a thesis or internship committee.
- Write and defend thesis or internship proposal.
- Submit the Pre-Thesis Research Approval Form if applicable.

Summer

- Begin working on thesis/internship project!

Third semester

- Begin writing thesis/internship report.
- Submit the Graduate Application for Graduation Form.

Fourth semester

- Complete writing thesis/internship report.
 - Schedule defense.
 - Defend thesis/internship report.
 - Submit thesis to the graduate school (Thesis option).
 - Submit internship report to Committee Chair & DGS (Internship option).
 - Return keys; keep in touch and follow us on social media.
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Pre-Thesis Research Approval Form

The Pre-Thesis Research Approval Form will normally be completed at the end of the second semester after a topic has been identified, the committee has been formed, and the proposal has been successfully defended. The form is available online on the ECU [Graduate School Thesis/Dissertation](#) webpage under 'Forms' and is to be completed electronically via DocuSign. Look for the 'Pre-Thesis Research Approval Instructions' link and a separate link for the 'Pre-Thesis

Research Approval form' immediately below. The online form should be filled out by the student and signed by their advisor and the department DGS.

B. Second Year Milestones

Application for Graduation

This form is available online via [ECU Pirate Port](#) and must be filled out by the student the semester prior to that in which the student plans to graduate. This will normally occur at the end of the student's third semester. At the time of application, students will be required by the ECU Graduate School to complete an online graduate student exit survey. *Students should contact the ECU Registrar's Office (regis@ecu.edu) if they need to change their graduation semester from Spring to the Summer semester.*

The Thesis or Internship Report

Thesis: *The M.S. thesis* should represent a substantial piece of original, innovative research. Guidelines for preparation and presentation of thesis texts are available from ECU's [Thesis/Dissertation Online Guide](#). The student and advisor should agree in advance on a referencing style utilized by a major geography journal. Normally, the student and advisor consult until the advisor feels the thesis draft is of sufficient quality to be reviewed by the committee. The draft is then submitted to the entire committee. The committee may elect to require further work or modifications or determine that the thesis is ready to defend.

Internship Report: *The M.S. internship report* should represent a combination of knowledge gained in the academic environment and application of this knowledge to the real world for solving practical problems. Critical thinking skills and discipline-specific information learned in coursework should demonstrate how practical problems or issues can be addressed and solved in the student's job assignments. Finally, the student should compare the similarity or dissimilarity of problem solving and decision-making processes presented and learned in academia and the literature with those carried out in the real world. Guidelines and referencing styles used for theses can be used in the internship report. Generally, the student and advisor should consult until the advisor finds that the report is of sufficient quality to be reviewed by the committee. The report is then submitted to the entire committee. At this point the committee may elect to require further work or modifications or determine that the report is ready to defend.

Timing and Scheduling of the Defense

Once the advisor decides that the thesis or internship report draft is of sufficient quality to be reviewed by the committee, the student works with their advisor and the committee to set a date for defense. As a matter of courtesy and pragmatism, students must allow committee members at least three weeks to evaluate the draft thesis or internship report. It is the student's responsibility to publicize the date and reserve a room for the defense by making arrangements with the graduate secretary.

To meet a Spring deadline, students are strongly advised to complete a final draft of their thesis or internship report no later than March 15, to ensure sufficient time for edits and revisions. *See the current Graduate School Academic Calendar or the [Thesis/Dissertation webpage](#) for the exact dates.*

US domestic students in good standing and who are registered in the Spring but do not finish their degree requirements may graduate in the summer without registering or paying tuition. International Students on a student visa should confer with Global Affairs to determine any requirements to graduate in the summer. There is a mid-July deadline for submitting the final thesis/internship report to the ECU Graduate School (see the current Graduate School Academic Calendar or the [Thesis/Dissertation webpage](#) for the exact dates). Thus, to meet a summer deadline, students are strongly advised to complete a final draft of their thesis/internship report no later than June 15, to ensure sufficient time for edits and revisions. Please note that faculty are frequently unavailable during summer months. Students should not expect to receive significant input from their committee and will likely have to work around busy schedules.

Students anticipating a defense at other times of the year should consult the current Graduate School Academic Calendar or the [Thesis/Dissertation webpage](#) for deadlines and work with their advisor to develop a reasonable timeline. If a student has accumulated sufficient hours for their degree, they no longer need to register for classes while finishing a thesis or internship report. An inactive student, i.e., a student who was not registered for any course credits the previous semester is considered inactive. Inactive students must apply for readmission to the graduate school and must be registered for at least one credit hour during the semester in which they intend to graduate.

The Defense

The thesis or internship report defense represents the final assessment of the student's knowledge in his or her area of expertise and the quality of the research project. This defense will normally take place in the student's fourth semester. The date and time of the defense should be well publicized at least one week in advance, and all geography faculty and graduate students invited to attend.

The defense will begin with a 15-to 20-minute presentation by the student, highlighting the major findings and implications of the thesis research or internship experience. Following a brief question-and-answer period, the committee will meet in a closed session with the candidate for the formal defense. The committee may ask questions about the research documented in the thesis or internship report and further assess the student's knowledge in the area of expertise. After the committee's questioning period, the committee will determine whether the student has passed or failed. Students passing the defense should expect that they will have to make additional changes to the thesis or internship report to remedy deficiencies identified by the committee. Students failing the defense should work with their committee to correct problems and schedule a future defense.

Submission

Thesis: The Graduate School has strict guidelines governing the formatting of any ECU thesis. Students should consult ECU's [Thesis/Dissertation Online Guide](#) for details. Upon completion of all required revisions, the student must complete the thesis 'signature page' available online on the ECU [Graduate School Thesis/Dissertation](#) webpage under 'Forms' and to be completed electronically via DocuSign. The online form must be signed by the student's thesis advisor, committee, DGS, and the department chairperson. *The Graduate School now requires electronic submission of theses/internship reports.* The submission process is described in detail in ECU's [Thesis/Dissertation Online Guide](#).

Internship Report: For students pursuing the non-thesis option, the final, formatted Internship Report must be electronically submitted to their committee chair and the DGS. The student must also complete the Internship Report 'signature page' available online on the department's Graduate Programs webpage under 'Quick Links' titled [Internship Report Form](#). The form is to be completed electronically via DocuSign, downloaded, and attached to the Internship Report before submission. The online form must be signed by the student's internship report advisor, committee, DGS, and the department chairperson. *Students will not receive credit for Internship hours, and may not graduate, until final copies of their report have been received.*

Before you Leave

Students are reminded to turn in all keys at the time of graduation. We wish you well – please keep in touch! Follow us on @ECUGeography via [LinkedIn!](#) [Facebook!](#) [Instagram!](#)

6. Departmental Assistantships

Departmental assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis and provide modest stipends to students in exchange for employment. The number and dollar value of assistantships are dependent upon both levels of funding and the nature of the student applicant pool and may vary from year to year. Students in the PSM concentration are eligible to receive a departmental assistantship.

Generally, there are two types of funding. *Graduate Teaching Assistantships* (GTAs) are funded by the ECU graduate school and allocated by the department Graduate Committee. *Graduate Research Assistantships* (GRAs) are associated with external research grants to individual faculty and are awarded at the discretion of the grant recipient in consultation with the Graduate Committee. Assistantships may be awarded for the academic year, or for a single semester. Students are not typically funded for more than four semesters.

Continued funding is contingent upon both satisfactory progress toward the degree and acceptable performance of assistantship duties. In addition to resulting in probation from the Graduate School, failure to maintain a 3.0 GPA will result in a re-evaluation of your assistantship status. All students receiving funding through the department will be evaluated at the end of the academic year for their academic and work performance. Renewal of a departmental assistantship is contingent upon a satisfactory evaluation. Students employed on research grants should discuss renewal with the senior faculty. Those faculty are encouraged to conduct a similar evaluation of the student and to inform the Graduate Director of their renewal status.

A. Summer Funding

Summer funding is separate from fall and spring semester funding. The department occasionally has money left in the budget at the end of the academic year and will use this money to support students working on their thesis and internship projects. Awards are made on an *ad hoc* basis and should not be counted on by graduate students. The DGS will send out a call in the spring semester inviting proposals for summer funding. Summer funding is contingent upon the Graduate School approving the amount and hours. Students can work up to 25 hours per week during the summer months in

positions that are funded by the Graduate School. An additional 5-10 hours per week of work is possible if the position is funded from other sources.

For GRAs, summer funding may be available if provided for in the budget supporting a given faculty member’s research project. Students should discuss this possibility with the senior faculty on the project.

Table 2. Checklist for Graduate Assistantship & Other Deadlines

Month/Year	Action
First Year	
July - August	<p>Complete I-9. This must be approved before you can begin Graduate Assistantship (GA) related work.</p> <p>International Students – Contact Dr. Bill Mallett at ECU Global Affairs and apply for Social Security Number (SSN) and Bank Account as soon as you arrive in Greenville.</p> <p>Sign your GA contract via DocuSign immediately once you receive it. Delay in completing this can result in a delay of your first paycheck.</p>
August (first week of semester)	<p>Check with department Administrative Assistant about your GA office assignment and access to GA office space.</p> <p>Check your GA assignment (DGS sends via email) and reach out to supervising faculty to discuss your GA duties.</p>
September	Send your profile information to DGS. Profile template will be sent out beforehand via email.
November	Check the duration of your GA contract. If your contract ends in December, then contact the DGS to discuss contract renewal for the Spring semester.
December	Sign your GA contract renewal (if applicable) ASAP to avoid processing delays.
January - February	<p>Check your Spring semester GA assignment (DGS sends via email) and reach out to supervising faculty to discuss your GA duties.</p> <p>Keep an eye out for summer funding announcement. Complete summer funding information and submit to DGS.</p>
March - April	Sign summer GA contract.
Second Year	
July - August	<p>US based students – Complete your NC Residency. Out-of-state waivers are not renewed automatically for second year US based students.</p> <p>Sign your GA contract via DocuSign immediately once you receive it. Delay in completing this can result in a delay of your first paycheck.</p>
August (first week of semester)	Check your Fall GA assignment (DGS sends via email) and reach out to supervising faculty to discuss your GA duties.

September	Apply for graduation by Sep 15 deadline, if graduating end of Fall semester.
November	Submit MS Thesis to ECU Graduate School by the mid-November deadline, if graduating end of Fall semester.
January - February	<p>Check your Spring semester GA assignment (DGS sends via email) and reach out to supervising faculty to discuss your GA duties.</p> <p>Keep an eye out for summer funding announcement. Complete summer funding information and submit to DGS. First year students are prioritized for summer funding; second year students are also considered.</p> <p>Apply for graduation by Feb 1 deadline, if graduating end of Spring semester.</p> <p>Submit MS Thesis to ECU Graduate School by the mid-April deadline, if graduating end of Spring semester.</p>

B. Duties, Responsibilities, and Evaluations

The typical GTA or GRA works 20 hours per week. Assistants are responsible for doing their jobs during all times school is in session, regardless of the demands placed on them by course or thesis work. Graduate Assistant (GA) assignments are made by the DGS, and generally involve employment under the supervision of one or more faculty members. GTA's are expected to meet with their faculty supervisor at the beginning of each semester to set up a work schedule *and should check in frequently throughout the semester*. GRA duties will be determined by the faculty member in charge of the grant. GAs will be evaluated at the end of each semester, and poor performance may result in the discontinuation of funding.

C. Tuition Remissions

The department may award a limited number of out-of-state tuition remissions to individual students on a competitive basis. Students receiving a remission, pay tuition at the rate of a North Carolina resident. Remissions will not automatically be renewed for a second year, and US based students are strongly encouraged to take the necessary steps to secure North Carolina residency by the beginning of their second year. Students who leave their assistantship or drop courses will be responsible for paying their remissions in full.

D. North Carolina Residency

Out-of-state students who are US citizens or permanent residents may qualify for North Carolina residency (and thus in-state tuition rates) after one year if certain conditions are met. Information about the requirements and application procedures for residency can be found at the Graduate School – '[Graduate Student Residency](#)' webpage.

E. Desks, Offices and Labs

The department has a limited amount of graduate student office space. Priority will be given to students receiving departmental assistantships. Desks and offices are intended to be active workspaces, not storage closets or social areas. Students who are not making appropriate use of their office space will have their desk reassigned to another student.

Please endeavor to keep department laboratory facilities neat and clean. Use of departmental equipment is limited to work-related activities, and students should refrain from using departmental computers or printers for personal matters.