Why GRADUATE STUDIES in GEOGRAPHY?

Explore critical questions about our environment and our society as you develop research skills. Study with award-winning faculty in an interdisciplinary department that combines fundamental analysis and research with practical, applied approaches to planning and implementation.

“Geography gave me the support I needed. I was able to take a complex project and really run with it.”

– Dr Sarah de Leeuw, PhD

Why QUEEN’S?

The Department of Geography and Planning at Queen's University offers a comprehensive graduate program based on innovative research and strong collaboration between faculty and graduate students. Our specialized Earth System Science labs include GIS and remote-sensing labs equipped with a wide range of the latest software and hardware, and facilities with the latest field equipment and laboratory instrumentation. In human geography, we provide strong support for fieldwork that engages topics of public interest from the community to the national and international scale. Many of our students work on questions of global significance, including development projects in Latin America or Africa, ecological change in the Arctic, or the relationship between international migration and human rights. We provide a place for graduate students to learn and excel within a vibrant and supportive intellectual community.

Program STRUCTURE

PhD (4 years): 3 courses (including GPHY 801), qualifying exam, dissertation, and oral defence.

RESEARCH Areas

- Bodies, Health, and Healthcare
- Citizenship, Identity, Justice, and Governance
- Earth Systems Science, with a strong focus on Arctic systems, forests, and resources
- Geographic Information Science
- Globalization, Development, Economies, and Sustainability
- Post-Colonialism, Indigenous Peoples, and Place
- Urban and Regional Planning
- Work, Identity, and Place (Labour Geographies)

We encourage you to identify an area of research interest and contact a potential supervisor before applying.

Visit the Department of Geography and Planning website to read faculty profiles and learn more about faculty members' research areas. When you find a faculty member with similar research interests to yours, contact them and tell them about your interest in graduate work, areas of research interest, and related experience. This is also an opportunity for you to find out if the faculty member is accepting new graduate students to supervise. Consider meeting with your potential supervisor at departmental events for prospective students.
2023-2024

Geography PhD Map

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PHD)

ACHIEVE YOUR ACADEMIC GOALS

YEAR I

• Key priorities include forming your committee, coursework, developing your research proposal, and preparing for your qualifying exam.
• Meet early with your supervisor to set expectations and discuss roles, responsibilities, program requirements, resources, research/occupational goals, timelines, and any required accommodation plans.
• Look to Student Academic Success Services for supports. Attend and participate in graduate seminars in our Geography Colloquium and in other departments such as SNID, Policy Studies, and Environmental Studies.

YEAR II

• Complete thesis proposal and defend during Qualifying Exam.
• Find your way through the academic process with the help of School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs professional development.
• Attend or present at a graduate conference such as the Canadian Association of Geographers Annual Meeting or the American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting.
• Apply for fieldwork funding if needed.

YEAR III

• Continue to meet regularly with your supervisor, review research progress, and write your dissertation. Check out the SGSPA writing camps such as Dissertation Boot Camps.
• Use conference presentations to create, discuss, and explore ways to disseminate research findings. Begin discussion of potential thesis defence examiners.
• Plan date of thesis submission for examination.
• Present your research at conferences and departmental seminars and work with supervisor to prepare for defence.
• Review submission and examination guidelines.
• Secure necessary oral defence accommodations.
• Discuss career pathways, references letters, and publication options with your supervisor.

YEAR IV

• Continue to attend conferences and connect with scholars in your field and with community partners, such as the American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting, or GeoConvention.
• Continue public outreach through social media and the Queen's Media Centre.
• Practice articulating the skills you have been developing in settings outside the university, such as casual conversation, networking, and interviews. Get help from a Career Services workshop.

MAXIMIZE RESEARCH IMPACT

• Think about audiences for your research.
• Complete CORE online module on research ethics if doing research regarding sensitive topics.
• Apply to SSHRC, OGS, and other funding.
• Attend conferences in your field such as Canadian Association of Geographers.

BUILD SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

• Join the departmental Graduate Student Council and seek ways to get involved.
• Consider positions in student services, the SGSPA, or media outlets like the Queen's Journal, CFRC, and the SGSPA Blog. Look in the AMS Club Directory.
• Use a Teaching Assistant, Research Assistant, or Research Fellow position to develop your skills and experience. Consult School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs professional development.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

• Volunteer with community organizations such as Sustainable Kingston, the Frontier Arch Biosphere Reserve, or WFN Kingston Community Health Centers.
• Take advantage of the numerous facilities and laboratories and learn what research is occurring in the various departmental research groups.
• Consider joining professional associations like the Canadian Association of Geographers or Canadian Geophysical Union.
• Attend departmental and Geography Graduate Student Council seminar series.

LAUNCH YOUR CAREER

• Finding a career fit starts with knowing yourself. Take the Career Services CareerMentor or meet with a career educator and coach for help.
• Start reading publications like University Affairs and the Chronicle of Higher Education. Browse non-academic labour market websites.
• Stay on the lookout for special events like Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs Career Week to explore your career pathways.

• Participate in your graduate and professional community through activities such as graduate student outreach programs, organizing conferences, and research seminars.
• If pursuing research abroad, investigate opportunities for support such as the Canadian Association of Geographers.
• Join groups on LinkedIn for specific careers or topics of interest and get involved in student or young researchers organizations.

• Do some targeted networking with people working in careers of interest, through Queen's Connects on LinkedIn, the Queens Alumni Association, professional associations, and at conferences. Get help from a Career Services workshop.
• Increase community engagement through the PhD Community Initiative.
• Expand your research network by connecting with researchers through social media, at conferences, or through LinkedIn.
• Organize panels at Canadian Association of Geographers and American Association of Geographers.
• Organize special issues in key geographic journals, such as Canadian Geographer and Hydrological Processes.

WHAT WILL I LEARN?

A graduate degree in Geography can equip you with:

• Research and technical skills
• Effective communication skills in multiple forms for diverse audiences
• Information management: proficient with software, and synthesize large amounts of information
• Time management: Meet deadlines and manage responsibilities despite competing demands
• Project management: develop ideas, gather information, analyze, critically appraise findings, draw and act on conclusions
• Creativity and innovation
• Perseverance
• Independence and experience as a collaborative worker
• Awareness, an understanding of sound ethical practices, social responsibility, responsive research, and cultural sensitivity
• Professionalism in all aspects of work, research, and interactions
• Leadership: initiative and vision leading people and discussion

WHERE CAN I GO?

A PhD in Geography can take your career in many directions. In Canada, less than 40% of all PhDs will work in post-secondary education—the majority will work in industry, government, or non-profits.

• Academia and teaching
• Consulting
• Government
• Professional associations and experience as a collaborative worker
• International development
• Non-profits

How to use this map

Use the 5 rows of the map to explore possibilities and plan for success in the five overlapping areas of career and academic. The map just offers suggestions—you don’t have to do it all! To make your own custom map, use the My Grad Map tool.
Application FAQs

What do I need to know to APPLY?

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS
• Master's degree. Transcripts from all previous programs/degrees are considered.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS
• Statement of research interest.
• C.V. highlighting scholarly outputs and work experiences.
• If English is not your native language, prospective students must meet the English language proficiency requirements in writing, speaking, reading, and listening. The following minimum scores are required: (1) TOEFL iBT: Writing (24/30); Speaking (22/30); Reading (22/30); Listening (20/30). Applicants must have the minimum score in each test as well as the minimum overall score, or (2) IELTS: 7.0 (academic module overall band score and a 7.0 for each test band), or (3) PTE Academics: 65, or (4) CAEL CE -70 (minimum overall score).

KEY DATES & DEADLINES
• Application due: January 31 (Domestic & International students), which must include all supporting documents. However, late applications may be considered on a rolling basis until all spots are filled.
• Notification of acceptance: March.

Before you start your application, please review the Graduate studies application process.

What about FUNDING?

Doctoral students in the Geography program are guaranteed minimum funding of $20,000 per year for four years. Minimum funding levels are, however, generally higher than the guaranteed minimum. The funding package may be comprised of graduate awards and teaching assistantships. Additional funding is highly likely.

We encourage all students to apply for external funding from OGS, SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR, and other sources. Queen's will automatically issue a one time $10,000 award to Doctoral students who have won federal government tri-council awards. For more information, see the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs' information on awards and scholarships.