Civil Engineering PhD Map

Applying to and Navigating Graduate Studies

Why GRADUATE STUDIES in CIVIL ENGINEERING?

As a PhD student in the field of Civil Engineering, you can play a vital role in future developments in such areas as design of earth structures, water quality and treatment, sediment transport, coastal protection, water and sewer networks, groundwater resources, and construction and rehabilitation of structures, including consideration of climate change impacts and other issues. Civil Engineering has a wide range of applications that contribute to modern life and its infrastructure.

Graduate students and their work are an important part of an ongoing research process that provides the community with ways of understanding natural, cultural, imaginative, social and technological phenomena. Check out whygradstudies.ca for more reasons to choose graduate studies in engineering.

Why QUEEN’S?

As a PhD student in Civil Engineering at Queen’s you are part of one of the most research intensive universities in Canada. Our research program is internationally renowned with a wide range of research activities in all of the major specialization areas of Civil Engineering.

The Civil Engineering Department’s objective is to provide a broadly-based education in civil engineering which is intrinsically supported by world-class research in the areas of Structural, Geotechnical, Hydrotechnical, and Environmental Engineering.

The Queen's graduate programs in Civil Engineering are home to some of the finest minds in the fields of civil and environmental engineering. Students have the chance to study engineering in an environment where multidisciplinary research and activities are encouraged and facilitated.

Program STRUCTURE

PhD (4 years): 4 graduate term length courses, research, comprehensive oral examination and a thesis.

RESEARCH Areas

- Geotechnical Engineering
- Environmental Engineering
- Hydrotechnical Engineering
- Structural Engineering

Visit the Civil Engineering website to read about research areas and learn more about faculty members’ research specialization. When you find a faculty member with similar research interests to yours, contact him/her and tell them about your interest in graduate work and related experience.

We suggest that you review the specific research projects currently being investigated by faculty members to identify a potential supervisor. Please note, however, that contacting a faculty member does not guarantee acceptance and you will need to submit your full application in order to be considered.
ACHIEVE YOUR ACADEMIC GOALS

YEAR I
- Key priorities include forming your committee, coursework, discussing direction of your thesis research, and beginning your research.
- Meet early with your supervisor to set expectations and discuss roles, responsibilities, program requirements, resources, research/upcoming grant timelines, and any required accommodation plans.
- Look to Student Academic Success Services for a variety of supports.

YEAR II
- Priorities include completing your comprehensive examination and pursuing substantive research.
- Set up regular meetings with your supervisor to discuss progress and obstacles to timely completion.
- Find your way through the academic process with the help of School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs professional development and the SGSPA website.

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 Camp or Dissertation on the Lake.
- Use conference presentations to create, discuss, and explore ways to disseminate research findings.
- Begin discussion of potential thesis defence examiners.

YEAR IV
- Plan date of thesis submission for examination.
- Present your research to graduate students and faculty or at conferences and work with supervisor to prepare for defence.
- Review submission and examination guidelines.
- Secure necessary oral defence accommodations.

MAXIMIZE RESEARCH IMPACT

YEAR I
- Think about audiences for your research.
- Complete the CORE online module on research ethics if doing research regarding sensitive topics.
- Apply to NSERC, OGS, and other funding sources.
- Attend conferences in your field, based on supervisor advising.

YEAR II
- Present your work at graduate conferences through professional associations, or topic conferences.
- Expand your research audience through social media such as Twitter or a blog.
- Consider publishing elements of your research.

YEAR III
- Continue to present at conferences.
- Consider participating in the 1 Minute Thesis (1MT) competition.
- Contact the Queen’s Media Centre for guidance on speaking to news outlets about your work.

YEAR IV
- Practice articulating the skills you have been developing in difficult forums: causal conversation, networking, and interviews. Get help from a Career Services workshop.

BUILD SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

YEAR I
- Serve on departmental, faculty or university committees.
- Consider positions in student services, the SGPS, or media outlets like the Queen’s Journal, CFRC, or the SGSPA Blog. Look in the AMS Club Directory.
- Use a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant position to develop your skills and experience.

YEAR II
- Hone skills for non-academic employment by continuing involvement on committees.
- Start keeping an e-portfolio of your skills, experiences and competencies.
- For help with teaching, get support from the Centre for Teaching and Learning. Enroll in SGSP92 or the PUTF Certificate for more professional development in teaching and learning.

YEAR III
- Investigate internships from MITACS and other sources.
- Find opportunities for extra training through CfT, School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs professional development, MITACS, or other sources to boost your skills.
- Prepare for work or study in a multi-cultural environment by taking the Intercultural Awareness Training Certificate hosted by QUC and FDISC.

YEAR IV
- Continue to attend conferences and connect with scholars in your field and with community partners.
- Continue public outreach through social media and the Queen’s Media Centre.
- Set up a meeting with the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs for a Grad Chat to discuss your research interests.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

YEAR I
- Consider volunteering with different community organizations.
- Connect to broader communities of engineers by joining one of the Engineering Society’s Design Teams.

YEAR II
- Participate in your graduate and professional conferences through activities such as graduate student outreach programs, organizing conferences, and research groups.
- Consider signing up for the PhD-Community Initiative program run by the SGSPA.

YEAR III
- Do some targeted networking with people working in careers of interest, through Queen’s Connects on LinkedIn, the Queen’s Alumni Association, professional associations, and at conferences. Get help from a Career Services workshop.

YEAR IV
- Consider joining professional societies like the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers.
- Join groups on LinkedIn reflecting specific areas or topics of interest.

LAUNCH YOUR CAREER

YEAR I
- Finding a career fit starts with knowing yourself. Take a Career Services workshop or meet with a career counsellor 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.

YEAR II
- Start building your teaching portfolio including student evaluations, and seeking mentorship.
- Explore different careers of interest by using Queen’s Connects on LinkedIn to connect with Queen’s alumni. For more information check out Career Cruising.
- Investigate requirements for professional positions or other opportunities related to careers of interest.

YEAR III
- Participate in hiring committees and attend job talks. Research academic careers of interest. Craft your CV and job application materials.
- Start focusing on non-academic areas of interest. Research organizations of interest and start putting together your industry resume and begin your job search plan.

YEAR IV
- Build connections with faculty outside of your department. Pursue interviews for faculty positions and apply for post-doc fellowships and positions.
- Apply to jobs or make plans for other adventures. Get help from Career Services with job searching, resumes, and interviews.
- If considering jobs abroad, research possible immigration regulations. If you are an international student interested in staying in Canada, consider speaking with an International Student Advisor.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?
A PhD in Civil Engineering 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. Our PhD students are equipped with a strong foundation for careers in:
- Academia and Research
- Consulting
- Public sector
- Manufacturing
- Policy and Governance
- Civil Engineering in the public domain
- Law

Taking time to explore career options, build experience, and network can help you have a smooth transition to the world of work after graduation.

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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 academics. The map just offers suggestions — you don’t have to do it all. To make your own custom map, use the My Major Map tool.
Graduate Studies FAQs

How do I make the most of my time at Queen’s?

Use the Grad Map to plan for success in five overlapping areas of your career and academic life. Everyone's journey is different - the ideas on the maps are just suggestions to help you explore possibilities. For more support with your professional development, take advantage of the SGSPA professional development framework and the new Individual Development Plan (IDP) process to set customized goals to help you get career ready when you graduate.

Where can I get help?

Queen's provides you with a broad range of support services from your first point of contact with the university through to graduation. Ranging from help with academics and careers, to physical, emotional, or spiritual resources - our welcoming environment offers the programs and services you need to be successful, both academically and personally. Check out the SGSPA website for available resources.

What is the community like?

At Queen’s, graduate students from all disciplines learn and discover in a close-knit intellectual community. You will find friends, peers and support among the graduate students enrolled in Queen's more than 130 graduate programs within 50+ departments & research centres. With the world’s best scholars, prize-winning professional development opportunities, excellent funding packages and life in the affordable, historic waterfront city of Kingston, Queen's offers a wonderful environment for graduate studies. Queen's is an integral part of the Kingston community, with the campus nestled in the core of the city, only a 10-minute walk to downtown with its shopping, dining and waterfront. For more about Kingston’s history and culture, see Queen's University's Discover Kingston page.

Application FAQs

What do I need to know to APPLY?

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS
- Master’s degree in Civil Engineering. Applicants with a Master’s degree in a cognate science may be admitted.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS
- If English is not a 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 deadline: March 1 to qualify for internal funding.
- Notification of acceptance: 2-3 months after the full application has been received.

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

What about FUNDING?

The level of financial support consequently varies among graduate students in the Department, with a guaranteed minimum level of $20,000. As part of the minimum funding package, you may serve as a Teaching or Research Assistant.

We encourage all students to apply for external funding from OGS, NSERC 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 or see what awards are offered through the Civil Engineering Department.

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