
DGES GRADUATE PROGRAM GUIDE



COLLEGE OF ATMOSPHERIC AND GEOGRAPHIC SCIENCES
**DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**
The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

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1. OVERVIEW OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

The Department of Geography and Environmental Sustainability (DGES) offers the following four graduate degrees in our on-campus program:

- [PhD in Geography and Environmental Sustainability](#)
- [MA in Geography and Environmental Sustainability](#)
- MS in Geography and Environmental Sustainability, *with 2 concentrations*:
 - [Environmental Systems](#)
 - [Geospatial Technologies](#)

In addition to the above degrees, DGES also offers a [Graduate Certificate in Geospatial Technologies](#) and a [Graduate Certificate in Climate Adaptation and Mitigation](#) that can be earned concurrently by any OU graduate student.

For more information on the DGES graduate program, please contact the current Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Tom Neeson neeson@ou.edu. The Director of Graduate Studies is the DGES faculty member who chairs the department's Graduate Committee and serves as the department's liaison with OU's Graduate College.

2. ADMISSION TO THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

2.1 Frequently asked questions

For answers to questions that are frequently asked by prospective students, please see: <https://www.ou.edu/ags/geography/students/prospective-graduate-students>

2.2 Application deadlines

For full consideration, applications must be received by the following deadlines:

- **January 15** for applicants seeking admission and funding for the following fall semester
- **April 1** for applicants seeking admission **but not funding** for the following fall semester
- **September 1** for applicants seeking admission for the following spring semester

2.3 Requirements for admission

An undergraduate degree in Geography is not required. We welcome applications from students from many backgrounds; recent graduate students have undergraduate degrees in Anthropology, Applied Ecology, Atmospheric Sciences, Biology, Communication, Economics, Education, Environmental Sustainability, Geographic Information Systems, Geography, Global Development and Anthro-Ecology, Health and Exercise Science, History, Industrial Engineering, International Studies, Mathematics, Mechanical Engineering, Meteorology, Native American Studies, Statistics, Strategic Communications, Urban Planning, Zoology, and more.

An undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0 is strongly preferred. In rare cases, a student with a GPA below 3.0 may be conditionally admitted. There are no specific undergraduate courses that are prerequisites for graduate study in DGES; however, individual faculty advisors may prefer students to have taken certain courses.

Most students complete a Master's degree before entering our Ph.D. program. However, strong applicants may be admitted directly into the Ph.D. program without first completing a Master's.

Before applying, you must identify a faculty member who is willing to serve as your thesis or dissertation supervisor. Prospective students should email faculty members to enquire about their availability and interest in serving as a thesis or dissertation supervisor.

2.4 Application process for new students

Applications may be submitted through the University of Oklahoma's Graduate College application system: <https://gograd.ou.edu/apply/>

Applicants must submit the following documents:

- ☐ A statement of interest which describes your interests and goals, showing how these interests and goals are related to current faculty expertise. Your statement of interest should specify which faculty member(s) might serve as your thesis or dissertation advisor.
- ☐ Names and contact information of two individuals who will be contacted to submit letters of recommendation on your behalf.
- ☐ A resume or c.v.
- ☐ A writing sample such as an undergraduate paper, publication, thesis, or major research paper, written in English.
- ☐ Transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended.
- ☐ International students may also need to submit documentation of English language proficiency.

GRE scores are not expected or reviewed. The application may allow you to submit other information, such as an educational or work history, or details about any previously completed theses. This information can be included on the CV or resume and is not required to be submitted separately.

If English is not your first language, the University of Oklahoma will require you to demonstrate English language proficiency before admission. Please read the current policies and requirements regarding language proficiency:

<https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/apply/international-applicants/english-proficiency>.

Please note that the University of Oklahoma makes a distinction between countries which have English as an official language and countries in which English is the native or first language. To determine whether you will be required to demonstrate English proficiency, please see OU's list of native English-speaking countries:

<https://ou.edu/admissions/apply/international/ou-approved-native-english-speaking-countries>

2.5 Current DGES students who wish to change their program

Current DGES graduate students may wish to change their degree program, by switching Master's programs (e.g., changing from the M.A. to the M.S.), by adding a graduate certificate from DGES or another OU department, or applying to continue into the PhD after completing a Master's degree. If you wish to switch your degree program, submit an [Academic Change of Program \(ACOP\) application](#). There is no application fee for an ACOP. When submitting an ACOP to continue into the PhD program after completing a Master's degree, you must submit a full set of application documents (i.e., all documents listed in section 2.4). If you are switching into the PhD program and you would like to be considered for a GTA position, please ensure that your ACOP application is received before the relevant deadline (section 2.2). There are no required documents for an ACOP when switching Master's programs or adding a DGES Graduate Certificate. Be sure to consult your academic advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies before pursuing a degree switch. International students should also contact the International Student Services office for any relevant guidance related to their visa status that could be encountered during a degree change.

2.6 Decision-making

Following the above deadlines, the DGES graduate committee (chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies) oversees the review of applications. Any DGES faculty member can access applications and share feedback with graduate committee members regarding which applicants should be admitted to the program and considered for funding. The graduate committee's recommendations regarding admittance and funding are discussed and voted upon during a DGES faculty meeting. Once final decisions are made, the Director of Graduate Studies contacts each applicant, informing them of the department's decision.

3. FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND FUNDING

3.1 Overview of financial support and funding

DGES may offer successful applicants financial support in the form of a Graduate Assistantship (GA), which is a form of employment through the university. Not all DGES graduate students hold GA positions and admittance to our graduate program is not contingent on procuring one. We offer Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs) on funded research projects, and Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) that support undergraduate and graduate learning across a wide range of departmental courses. GTA responsibilities vary by course but may include grading and instruction of lab sections.

Our students are often competitive for University Fellowships, which supplement GRA and GTA funding. Multiple fellowships are available, including those that support low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students. Students who apply for admission to the program may be nominated for consideration for these fellowships; no action is required by the applicant. For more information, please visit: <https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/cost-and-aid/aid>

The timing of GA contracts varies by degree and availability. Generally, we offer Master's students two years of funding and Doctoral students four years of funding. GA funding is always contingent on student academic progress. Sometimes it is also subject to the availability of funds.

Be aware that most GTA positions are 9-month appointments that do not provide funding for summer months.

In addition to a biweekly stipend, 0.5 FTE GA positions include [health insurance](#) coverage and tuition waivers. Tuition waivers do not cover the cost of student [fees](#). To estimate the cost of fees, use the [OU tuition and fee calculator](#).

3.2 Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs)

The details and duration of GRA positions are dependent on the funding source(s) and are supervised by a DGES faculty member. Generally, GRAs are 0.5 FTE positions that entail a biweekly stipend for an average of 20 hours a week of research-related labor determined by the supervising faculty member. GRA positions can be 9- or 12-month appointments. If you are offered a GRA position, be sure to discuss the details and duration with the supervising DGES faculty member.

3.3 Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs)

A Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) is a graduate student on stipend whose primary responsibilities support the instructional mission of the university. GTA positions are typically 9-month (during fall and spring semesters only) appointments, and typically 0.5 FTE. TAs earn their biweekly stipend with up to 20 hours a week (for a 0.5 FTE appointment) of instruction-related labor associated with a specific class (or classes). We attempt to align expertise and interests when assigning GTA positions, but students may be assigned to serve as a GTA for a course that they themselves have not yet taken. Be aware that part of the expectation that comes with obtaining a graduate degree is that you will have a certain amount of mastery of the entire discipline. For those leaving DGES with a PhD, academic employers will expect you to be able to teach an introductory course in human, physical, or technical geography, so the more variety of these 1000- and 2000-level assignments you have in graduate school, the better prepared you will be for the future.

3.4 Serving as instructor of record

DGES doctoral students will be allowed to teach a DGES class as the instructor of record if they have completed at least two semesters as a Teaching Assistant at OU or comparable institution for the class in question or a similar class or have similar relevant professional experience as an instructor. They must also be in good standing within DGES and the Graduate College. If a doctoral student does not have at least two semesters of experience as a Teaching Assistant or instructor of record, they may be appointed as an instructor of record if they possess a demonstrably sophisticated grasp of the course material and an appropriate degree of poise, confidence, and determination as assessed by DGES leadership in conversation with the student and the student's advisor. For a graduate level course, the instructor of record also must hold graduate faculty status.

DGES recognizes that teaching experiences can be vital for the professional development of students who aspire to a career in academia. For the most part, opportunities for PhD students to serve as instructors of record will be limited to special circumstances, such as a single semester course release or an unexpected leave for a professor where course materials will be provided to

the student instructor of record to reduce the burden. If a student instructor of record is expected to develop the majority of content, they should receive compensated time during the summer, in the form of a 0.2 FTE GTA, before teaching the course, to reduce the hours dedicated to course prep during the semester. Additionally, DGES recognizes the increased responsibility and time attached to serving as instructor of record and will compensate it appropriately. Further DGES understands that taking on an instructor of record position as a student could cause a delay in graduation and will recognize that, should an application to extend funding be required.

3.4.1 Serving as student instructor of record due to departmental need

The procedure for selecting graduate students to serve as instructors of record due to departmental need is as follows:

The department chair should identify the department's needs for graduate student instructors of record as early in the semester prior as possible to allow lead time for the Graduate Committee to select the instructors and for the students to familiarize themselves with the content.

When an opening is identified, the chair will provide that information to the Director of Graduate Studies (including the course number and section). The Director of Graduate Studies will send out a call for applications to all PhD students. All PhD students will be eligible to apply. They will be asked to provide a one-page essay about their qualifications and relevant experience to teach the class (such as coursework or TA assignments at OU or elsewhere), as well as why teaching a course as the instructor of record is relevant to their career goals. They will also be asked to have their advisor provide a one-paragraph statement of support to the Director of Graduate Studies. The Graduate Committee will review the applications and make a recommendation to the department.

The DGES Chair will encourage the faculty member who normally teaches the course to share their course materials with the selected student instructor of record. The student instructor of record can choose to adapt the materials, but ideally, they should be provided with a previous version of Canvas that includes a syllabus, assignments, and lecture materials. Ideally, the previous instructor of the course should support the student instructor as a mentor. The Director of Graduate Studies will also provide support, connect the student to past instructors of record for advice and additional materials, and offer an opportunity for the student to be observed during the semester to receive feedback and a reference for future teaching opportunities.

Serving as instructor of record is a 0.5 FTE position and will average 20 hours per week. In recognition of the expertise required to serve as instructor of record, the stipend for a student instructor of record will be 140% of their typical stipend for the semester in which they serve as instructor. This will require the front office to provide a new offer letter for that semester. The fact that they served as an instructor of record will also be taken into consideration favorably if they apply for a funding extension later in their career at OU.

3.4.2 Serving as student instructor of record outside of departmental need

It is possible for a PhD student to advocate to teach a course as instructor of record without there being an open call from the Director of Graduate Studies for a particular class. This cannot be a course that a faculty member is already regularly teaching. It could be a course that is currently not being offered, or a special topics course that would have broad appeal to undergraduates.

The stipends will be equal to those offered to student instructors of record in positions that came from an open call (i.e. 140% of their typical stipend for the semester in which they serve as instructor of record with the 0.2 FTE GTA appointment in summer to prepare). The student instructor of record should acknowledge that courses that are not regularly offered may not be as popular. If a course does not meet enrollment minimums, the course will be cancelled, and the student will be placed in a regular GTA position at the standard stipend for that semester. The expectation is that these courses would be offered in fall or spring semesters. Course offerings in summer sessions are possible but would need careful consideration as they are less likely to make enrollment minimums. Further, stipends for summer sessions would be lowered due to the decreased number of biweekly pay periods in these sessions (i.e. 6, instead of 10). Course offerings in winter session are not possible for GTAs as the overlap with fall and spring appointments would push them above 0.5 FTE in a semester.

These will not be guaranteed appointments. They are subject to the financial constraints of the department. There cannot be an expectation that the course that is being proposed will substantially negatively impact enrollment in other courses offered in the same semester (which will be determined by the Director of Undergraduate Studies in consultation with the undergraduate advisor). The student will need to provide evidence that they are capable of managing the additional expectations without substantially slowing their progress to degree completion. In other words, these special appointments that are not filling a need in the department may not be viewed as favorably if a funding extension is later requested as one from a student that responded to a call for a particular course. The student must also be able to discuss the proposed content of the course, what qualifications they have to teach it, and how teaching the course will further advance their career goals.

The process to secure an instructor of record position outside an open call should begin with a conversation between the student and their advisor to make sure the advisor supports the plan and timeline for when the course would be taught and that the advisor is willing to provide mentorship to the student during the teaching experience.

Once the advisor and student have a proposal, they should schedule a meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss the proposal further. The Director of Graduate Studies will present the proposal to the department chair for approval/denial of additional funding. The Director of Graduate Studies will simultaneously communicate with the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the undergraduate advisor to ensure that the proposed course and semester of offering is acceptable and that it will not create any issues for undergraduates. The Director of Undergraduate Studies has the right to object to the offering if they are concerned about how it will impact enrollment in other courses, or if they feel that there are too many “new” courses being offered in that semester.

Assuming the proposal is approved by all affected stakeholders, the Director of Graduate Studies will then connect the student instructor of record to the department chair to facilitate scheduling of the course. As with any instructor of record position for a graduate student, the Director of Graduate Studies will offer an opportunity for the student to be observed during the semester to receive feedback and a reference for future teaching opportunities and will also connect the student to the appropriate staff person to assist in advertising the course.

Because of the requirement to provide a 0.2 FTE GTA appointment to the student instructor of record in the summer before a course that is developed from scratch will be offered, this process will have an extended timeline from beginning to end compared to open calls for existing courses. The latest that a student and their advisor can bring a proposal to the Director of Graduate Studies to begin the process would be January prior to the course being offered (i.e. whether the student wanted to offer the course in Fall 2026 or Spring 2027, the first discussion with the Director of Graduate Studies would need to be in January 2026). The course will need to be added to the schedule for fall semesters by March 1st of the same year and for spring semesters by October 1st of the preceding year. The 0.2 FTE summer appointment that accompanies the development of a course from scratch will need to be approved by the department chair and communicated to the financial admin by the Director of Graduate Studies in order to process payroll no later than April 15th.

3.5 Holding a GTA or GRA appointments above 0.5

Sometimes students working as GAs have the opportunity to pursue a 0.70 FTE appointment, but a special request must be made to the Department Chair and Director of Graduate Studies. This request must also be approved by the Graduate College. Students who have financial needs that remain unmet on a 0.5 FTE should explore the resources available in section 4.

3.6 Continued funding beyond initial contract

The typical duration of a GA contract is two years (for Master's students) or four years (for PhD students), which matches the typical time-to-degree for DGES graduate students. However, DGES recognizes that not all students will be able to complete their degree within two (or four) years and may require a GA position beyond the initial two (or four) years.

The Director of Graduate Studies will invite applications for continued funding in early fall (for spring semester funding) and early spring (for fall semester funding). Students already in the program seeking a new GA contract (i.e., students who were previously unfunded or who are continuing beyond the two/four years of funding in their initial contract) need to:

1. Email the Director of Graduate Students a single PDF document that contains:
 - a. A one-page statement that gives a summary of your degree progress and research accomplishments to date, your plans for completing your degree, and a detailed timeline that explains the remaining tasks and when you will complete them. This statement must persuade the Graduate Committee that you are making good progress towards your degree and have a reasonable plan for completing it.
 - b. A list of all funding you've had since starting the graduate degree program
 - c. The specific semester(s) for which you are requesting funding
 - d. Unofficial transcripts for all coursework completed at OU

2. Request that your academic advisor write a letter detailing the progress of your graduate studies and send it to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Please note that this is a competitive process. Funding is not guaranteed, and your application will be considered alongside the applications of students who have applied to enter our graduate program that same semester.

3.7 Summer funding

DGES may occasionally have summer GTA or GRA positions available. Any available summer GTA or GRA positions will be advertised during the spring semester. Instructions for applying for these positions will be provided when the positions are advertised.

3.8 Payroll, Paystubs and Direct Deposit Procedures

GAs are paid on the same calendar as all other OU employees. Payroll will not begin until all necessary HR paperwork is completed. New hires will be contacted by Shared Business Services to complete that paperwork. OU employees are paid two weeks in arrears. This means if your first pay period was August 15 to August 28, you will not receive the paycheck until September 11. Pay periods run from Saturday to the Friday two weeks later (14 days).

You must submit your timesheet each pay period by the deadline. If you do not, the department will receive a notice of warning, and you will be warned by the Director of Graduate Studies. Your timesheet is pre-populated for the proper number of hours per week. **Do not alter it.** If you have reasons you think it should be changed, please talk to the Director of Graduate Studies first.

All OU employees, including GAs, must receive their paycheck through direct deposit. You will complete your direct deposit information in the [HR Self-Service Portal](#). You sign in to this portal using your OU 4x4 and password. Here you can access your paystubs, tax information, and complete (or update) direct deposit information. Direct deposit information must be submitted by the day after a pay period ends to guarantee it will be executed properly when the check is dispersed. If you do not provide direct deposit information, your paycheck will be mailed to the address listed in your Personal Details in the HR Self-Service Portal. If you do not provide the direct deposit details in a timely fashion or wish to not use direct deposit, see the OU HR page for information about [PayCards](#). You can access payroll processing and payment dates [here](#).

4. RESOURCES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

4.1 DGES Graduate Students Communication Mediums

DGES uses various mediums to communicate with students and provide important materials. This includes the department website, your official OU email address, the DGES Grad Student Teams Channel, and the graduate student listserv. It is vital that you regularly check your email for official information from the department, the Graduate College, Graduate Student Senate, and the Association of Graduate Geography Students (see below). Graduate students may also use other mediums, such as social networks, flyers, or the whiteboard on the 4th floor to communicate information as well.

4.1.1 Graduate Student Listserv

DGES maintains a listserv with all students enrolled in on-campus degree programs (dges_grad_c-l@lists.ou.edu). Near the beginning of each semester, the front office staff updates the list using official OU documentation of who is enrolled in our degree programs. New students are added using the default email address you were assigned when you were admitted. If you have established [an email alias](#), you need to let the front office staff know so that they can also add that email address to the listserv. Anytime you change your alias, you need to alert the front office staff. If you are not receiving listserv emails that your colleagues are receiving, contact the front office staff for help.

Please be careful to minimize the use of the Reply All button to a listserv message. Unless you have changed the default settings in your Outlook email, the default action may be to Reply All. You do not want or need everyone in the email chain to see your response in most cases. Any graduate student that receives messages from the listserv should be able to send messages to the listserv (again, if you use an email alias, it needs to be added, too). Be judicious in what you are sending to the listserv and realize that faculty and staff also are members of the listserv. Listserv messages should be reserved for announcements of proposal, thesis or dissertation defenses, and University or departmental activities and announcements. If you find yourself receiving an access denied email when you try to distribute information through the listserv, work with the front office staff to find a solution. If you need to send a message that includes the students enrolled in the online Masters or graduate certificate, contact the Director of Graduate Studies for help sending those messages.

4.1.2 DGES Website

The [DGES website](#) houses some resources for graduate students, including a copy of this document and a [directory of all graduate students](#) in on-campus programs. The front office staff keeps the directory up to date. They will contact new students to collect the necessary information and headshots for the website. If there are errors in the information or updates are necessary (such as a change in advisor), contact the front office staff for corrections. Do not make the staff chase you for the information. If you have privacy concerns about being listed in the directory, please speak to the Director of Graduate Studies. The [Resources](#) section of the DGES website has good information that may not be covered in this guide.

4.1.3 DGES Grad Students Teams Channel

The Director of Graduate Studies maintains a Teams Channel for the DGES graduate students. Members of the channel include current DGES graduate students, DGES front office staff, and the chair and associate chair of DGES. The Director of Graduate Studies is the owner. The Teams Channel will be used to house important documents (such as copies of the Advising Agreement and the Annual Report), collect data and images for various purposes (including updating the website or developing marketing materials), and as a space graduate students can use to store materials that they need to share with other graduate students. Certain documents can only be viewed and downloaded. This prevents someone from using the blank version of a form as their own copy. If you cannot access the [DGES Grad Students Team Channel](#), contact the Director of Graduate Studies. If you are concerned about your privacy in this space, please discuss your concerns with the Director of Graduate Studies.

4.2 Shared Governance and Student Organizations within DGES

Within the DGES community, the graduate students are considered a vital component. As a graduate student you are expected to participate in departmental events, such as colloquia, searches to fill vacant faculty lines, committee service opportunities, and social events. Announcements for these events are distributed through the graduate student listserv. Additional opportunities will be advertised to participate in events through our [College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences](#) as well as the [Graduate College](#) and other parts of the University.

The student voice is appreciated and, as such, many DGES standing committees, as well as the various ad hoc committees, generally have a dedicated position for a graduate student to fill. Further, all graduate students are encouraged to participate in the Association of Graduate Geography Students, as well as other recognized student organizations and honor societies within the department and across campus.

4.2.1 Shared Governance

Many standing committees within DGES have dedicated slots for graduate students to serve. Additionally, various ad hoc committees that are needed throughout the year may have slots for graduate student representation, including but not limited to faculty search committees. Appointments to those slots are made by the Association of Graduate Geography Students.

Standing DGES Committees with a dedicated graduate student position include: Belonging, Community and Culture Council (B3C), Graduate Committee, and Events and Outreach.

4.2.2 The Association of Graduate Geography Students

The collective voice of [DGES graduate students](#) speaks through the Association of Graduate Geography Students (AGGS), as well as representatives serving on the [Graduate Student Senate](#).

For the 2026-2027 School Year, AGGS leadership is:

President: Robert Moore

Vice President: Rowland Olawale Emmanuel

Secretary: Marinna Stopa

Treasurer: Oyinkansola Tella

Event Chair: Abby Curry

4.2.3 DGES Honor Societies

Many graduate students find themselves receiving invitations to a variety of “honor societies” over their careers. Some of them are truly honor societies with strict membership criteria and benefits worthy of the fees you pay. Many of those societies are listed as members of the [Association of College Honor Societies](#). Others are not necessarily scams, but are not always in your best interest to join. If you are unsure, ask your advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies for help.

Within DGES, we host local chapters of two geography-related honor societies: Gamma Sigma Theta and Gamma Theta Upsilon. Gamma Sigma Theta is a recently established honor society for students pursuing degrees in geospatial technologies. Gamma Theta Upsilon is the international honor society in geography. It was established in 1928, and OU’s Alpha Iota Chapter was established in February 1950. Invitations to join these organizations are sent each year through the graduate student listserv (usually each semester). The criteria for membership (based on amount of coursework and GPA) will be included in the invitation. If you meet the criteria, we encourage you to apply. If the cost of membership is a barrier for you, please talk to the Director of Graduate Studies.

4.2.4 Other DGES Recognized Student Organizations

DGES often has other recognized student organizations besides AGGS. These include but are not limited to the Geography and Environmental Sustainability Club and the GIS Club. While many of them have undergraduate students serving as officers, they are not exclusive to the undergraduates. If you see advertisements for their activities and are interested in participating, you are welcome to join in.

4.3 Resources for finding housing

AGGS is committed to helping incoming graduate students find affordable housing that meets their needs. If you need assistance finding housing, please contact any AGGS officer.

The University of Oklahoma offers on-campus housing for graduate students, including Traditions Square and the Kraettli Apartments. Please refer to [OU Housing & Food Services](#) for general information about on-campus housing. For off-campus housing, popular options include: [Callaway House Apartments](#), [The 2900](#), [Montara Park](#), [Redpoint](#), [Millenium](#), [The Links](#), [The Renaissance](#), [The Collective](#), [Alight 12th Avenue](#), [SpringField](#), or [Terra at University North Park](#).

While most of these housing options offer transportation to campus (i.e., shuttle service), some do not. Please check with the apartment's management about available resources and amenities.

The University of Oklahoma also maintains a database of some off-campus rental housing [here](#).

4.4 Transportation services for incoming students

The University of Oklahoma, through the New International Student Orientation Experience (NISO) program, provides incoming international students with airport transportation (i.e., pick-up) services from Will Rogers International Airport to Norman. Should you need transportation assistance, please review the International Student Services [webpage](#). For domestic students needing assistance with transportation upon arrival in Norman, please contact your faculty advisor and/or AGGS Officers.

4.5 International Student Services

All incoming international students should reference the [International Student Service \(ISS\)](#) webpage for information regarding immigration rulings, employment and working in the U.S., and transportation services.

Please note that all international students must complete a mandatory internet orientation (MIO), which should be completed prior to your first semester at OU.

4.6 OU Graduate College and Graduate Student Life

The [Graduate College website](#) is a vital resource. Note especially its pages devoted to new graduate students and the offerings of Graduate Student Life. As newly admitted graduate students learned from the official admittance email that they received from the Graduate College, this website also features important information about enrollment. A wide range of events and activities, including professional development, are listed [here](#).

The Graduate College also offers [Academic Life Coaching](#), in which graduate students can meet one-on-one with a coach to identify strategies for navigating academic and non-academic challenges.

4.7 Funding and resources for research, travel and publishing

The OU Graduate College offers Travel and Research grants to support graduate student scholarship, as well as completion fellowships for PhD students entering their final year. Available resources are summarized here: <https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/cost-and-aid/aid>

The OU Libraries Research Publication Subvention Funding may be used to defray publication costs in open-access journals. Multiple funding programs are available and are summarized here: <https://libraries.ou.edu/content/research-publication-subvention-funding>

The OU Graduate Student Senate offers [grants to support the scholarly endeavors](#) of graduate students.

The Data Institute for Societal Challenges (DISC) offers [seed funding to graduate student](#) teams who are working on research projects related to data-enabled research or data science.

The College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences provides [Research Travel Assistance Awards](#) to faculty, research scientists (including post-docs), and graduate students. Students must have a letter of support from a faculty member to apply. Each year an amount of money is allocated to the awards, and funding is granted on a first-come first-served basis.

The Association of Graduate Geography Students offers small awards for research expenses or travel on a rolling basis. Applications are due on the first of each month. Students will not receive more than one research and one travel award from AGGS during their time at OU. Funds are made available through the generosity of anonymous donors and students are expected to write a thank you note to the donor before the funds will be distributed. The application and more information about the awards can be found [here](#).

In certain instances, DGES may make funds available for students to travel to other conferences. This is rare and can take the form of the department renting a van for transportation, securing a block of rooms, paying for registration fees, or offering a travel award. Departmental travel policy must be followed at all times (see Section 4.11) to obtain these funds, and they should not be viewed as primary sources of travel funding. Students should have already utilized other sources of funding from the Graduate College, Graduate Student Senate, College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences, AGGS, and their advisor before requesting funds from the department.

4.8 Departmental awards

DGES offers departmental awards that recognize outstanding contributions by graduate students in teaching, research and service. A partial list of current awards is available [here](#). Most awards are evaluated from students' annual application to the [Centralized Academic Scholarship Hub \(CASH\)](#), which is open from October 1 to February 1. Students must complete both the general application and the DGES-specific application to be considered. We encourage you also to allow CASH to search for other opportunities for you as there are other scholarships across campus for which you might be eligible.

The following awards are made using the applications in the CASH system:

Nutter Scholarship- The Vernon & Sandra Nutter Award is presented to a student for superior academic performance. Vernon Nutter was a 1970 Geography graduate who, upon his passing, wanted to assist outstanding students in the department. May be awarded to a full-time, regularly enrolled undergraduate or graduate student in the Department of Geography and Environmental Sustainability. Eligibility of candidates is based on progress toward earning a degree, and a GPA of 3.75 grade point average or higher on a 4.0 scale. Applications will be reviewed based on academic performance, an essay written by the candidate, and two letters of recommendation by persons familiar with the candidate's academic work. This scholarship has a separate application in the CASH system and letters of reference must also be received by the February 1 deadline.

Sukhwal Scholarship - The Bheru and Lila Sukhwal Scholarship is awarded to a graduate student who produces outstanding work in the area of political geography - this also includes political ecology. This scholarship is awarded using an evaluation of the data in the DGES application (GPA and service) but includes an additional essay that must be completed within the DGES application to be considered for the scholarship.

Nostrand Scholarship - The Richard L. Nostrand Scholarship recognizes outstanding graduate student research in any subdiscipline that has a significant historical dimension. This scholarship is awarded using an evaluation of the data in the DGES application (GPA and service) but includes an additional essay that must be completed within the DGES application to be considered for the scholarship.

The scholarships below are all awarded using an evaluation of student's GPA, service, and in some cases, the financial need essay, from the DGES application:

Olson Scholarship - The Ralph and Margaret Olson Scholarships were established by a very generous donation from the late Ralph and Margaret Olson. Ralph Olson was a member of the Geography faculty for more than 30 years. These scholarships recognize students who have demonstrated commitment to geography, academic excellence, and financial need. The Ralph and Margaret Olson Scholarships are awarded to both undergraduate and graduate students. Graduate winners must have completed at least one academic year of graduate work at OU with one or more semesters remaining. Candidates are identified on the basis of academic achievement, intellectual ability, financial need, and literary and speaking skills.

Standley Scholarship (different than the Standley Publication award) - Charles S. Standley, Jr. Geography Scholarship Fund provides scholarships to undergraduates and graduate students that demonstrate academic excellence and financial need.

Bollinger Scholarship - Clyde & Hazel Bollinger Geography Award Fund provides scholarships to undergraduates and graduates with academic excellence, with priority given to those majoring in geography.

Brent Scholarship - Dr. Millard D. Brent Geography Scholarship provides scholarships to undergraduates and graduate students that are full-time students with demonstrated financial need.

Pugh Family Scholarship - The Pugh Family Pioneer Geography scholarship provides funds to undergraduates and graduate students making satisfactory progress to graduation with a demonstrated record of academic excellence and financial need.

Occasionally other awards, notably the student publication award and graduate teaching award, will be announced through the student list-serv. These awards require support from a faculty member. Talk to your advisor if you think you are eligible for these awards.

4.9 Health and well-being

Please know that you may always reach out to AGGS leadership, the Director of Graduate Studies, and/or the DGES Chair with any concerns about yours or another students' health and well-being. Important resources include:

[OU Health Services](#) are offered through the Goddard Health Center

The [OU Counseling Center](#) offers comprehensive mental health services to graduate students. Counseling sessions are free for students with the OU graduate student health plan. Students can also access help 24/7/365 for free through the [TimelyCare](#) app.

The [OU Ombudsperson](#) is an independent entity that works to ensure OU community members across all three campuses have an impartial, confidential space to express concerns, seek guidance and constructively resolve conflicts. With the help of the ombudsperson, individuals can manage and resolve conflicts within the university community early, informally and at the lowest level possible, often without the need to pursue formal proceedings. Contacting the University Ombudsperson can be a first step, a last resort, or anywhere along the way. Use of the services is voluntary and free. The University Ombudsperson serves all faculty, staff and students at the Norman, OU Health Sciences Center and OU-Tulsa campuses. They can help with conflict between two students, a student and a staff member or a student and a faculty member.

The [OU Food Pantry](#) provides free food and resources such as clothes, menstrual products, and books to the OU community. Please check their website for hours and location. All current OU students, faculty and staff are eligible to use the OU Food Pantry.

The [OU Career Center](#) provides a variety of resources for job hunting including mock interview practice, workshops, and career advising, as well as free headshots and the Career Closet that provides professional clothes to students to help them prepare for interviews at no cost to them through donations.

The College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences has an [Assistant Dean of Student Services](#) that can be a resource for students if they need to report an issue or want someone to talk to about issues with their courses, advisor, or the program.

4.10 Emergency financial assistance

Emergencies can happen to anyone, and they often put additional stress on already strapped finances. In addition to resources like the Counseling Center and the Food Pantry, referenced in section 4.8, the [OU Student Relief Fund](#) is available throughout the year for unexpected crises such as natural disasters, theft of personal property, or death in the family, among others. Most important, if you are facing a financial emergency, do not be afraid to alert your advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies and/or the chair of DGES. There may be other resources that we can access to help you.

4.11 How to report instances of bias, harassment, misconduct, or assault

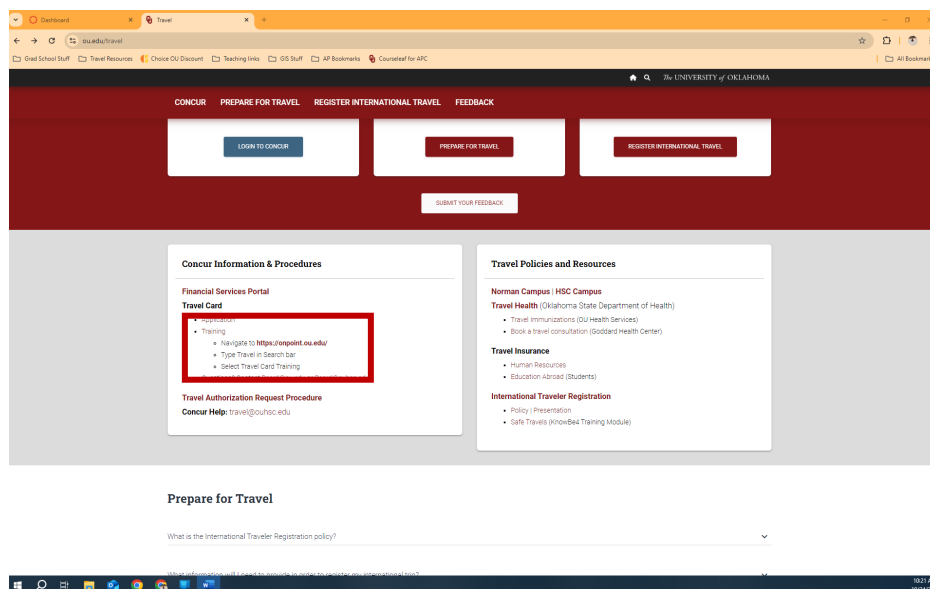
DGES is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all students. For guidance on how to report instances of bias, harassment, misconduct or assault, please see the graphic in Appendix D. Please know that you may always reach out to AGGS leadership, the Director of Graduate Studies, the chair of the Belonging, Community, and Culture Council (B3C), the graduate student representative to B3C and/or the DGES Chair with any concerns. You can ask for the name of the current B3C chair or students reps (both graduate and undergraduate) from the Director of Graduate Studies at any time. There are anonymous reporting boxes on 4th and 6th floors as well that are regularly checked by DGES staff.

4.12 DGES Travel Policy for Graduate Students

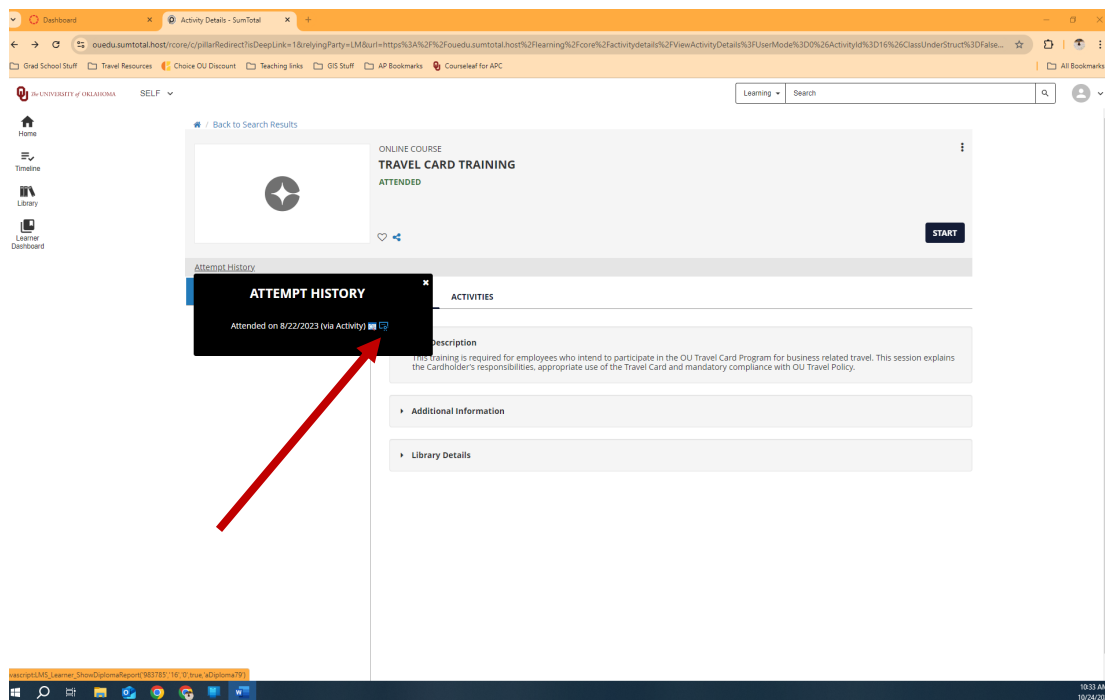
4.12.1 OU Travel Cards

Graduate students who are funded as GRAs or GTAs through DGES are eligible to obtain travel cards from OU to be used for university-related travel (for research or conference expenses). Below are the steps to apply for a travel card:

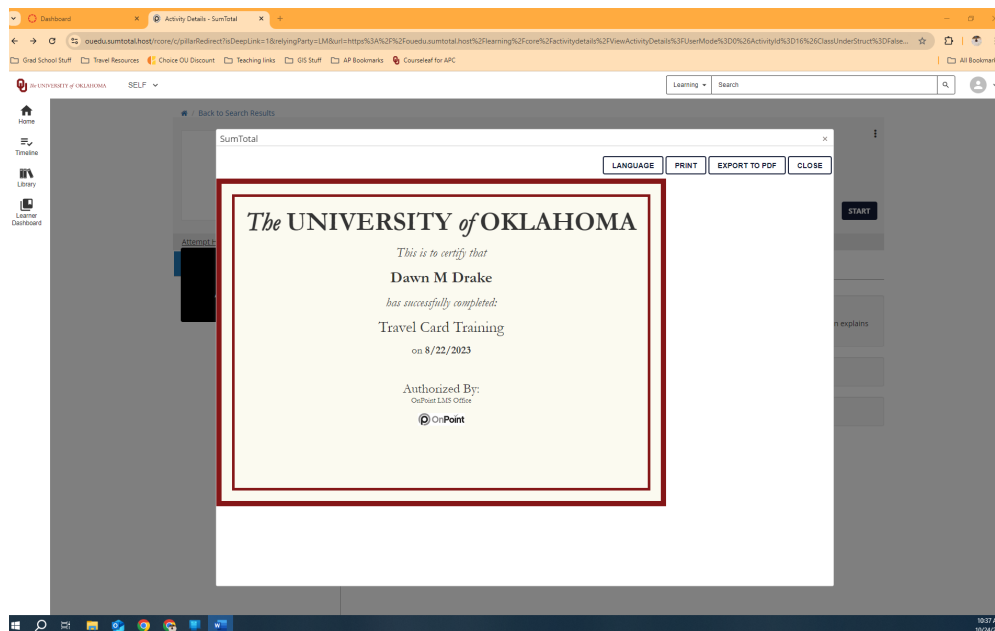
1. Go to <https://travel.ou.edu>. Scroll down to the box that says Concur Information & Procedures and click on Training to be taken to the training website.



2. On the training website, type Travel into the search bar at the top of the screen and select Travel Card Training from the results. Press Start to begin the training. When you are done, navigate back to the first screen of the training again (where you selected Start). It should now say Attended under the course name. Click on the link that says Attempt History and then click on the little black image with the blue border. A completion certificate with your name and date will pop-up.



3. Export the certificate as a PDF and email it to the Director of Graduate Studies.



4. Go back to <https://travel.ou.edu> and again scroll down to the Concur Information and Procedures box again. Click on Application, under the Travel Card options. Login with your OU 4x4 and then select Travel Card from the list of applications.

5. Carefully read through the contract that appears on the next screen. When you apply for a travel card, you agree that if you misuse the travel card (whether intentionally or by accident) that the

amount that was charged to the travel card in error will be deducted from your paycheck. You also agree to submit expenses in a timely manner after travel is complete (the University does understand you purchase registration and airfare well ahead of the actual travel). Failure to submit expense reports in a timely fashion after the conclusion of the travel can result in the employee having to pay taxes on reimbursements. Verify and correct, if necessary, the information that is prepopulated under the Applicant Information. This must match the information that is on file with HR. Under Business Officer name, type the name of the DGES Chair and under Business Officer email, type the email address of the DGES Chair. Type out the department name (Geography & Environmental Sustainability) – do not abbreviate.

6. Select either \$500/\$5,000 or \$2,500/\$5,000 as your limit. In most cases, \$500 per purchase and \$5,000 per month should be sufficient, but if you think that you might be traveling on funded travel where the airfare or hotel will exceed \$500 (such as international airfare or a hotel in a large city for more than a few days), select \$2,500/\$5,000. It is better to have more credit and not use it than not enough but remember that anything you put on this credit card, you must be able to cover with a university fund. GSS and Robberson funds **cannot** be applied directly to a travel card. If you put expenses on the travel card that you plan to cover with Robberson or GSS funds, you would have to have those costs deducted from your paycheck, which can have tax implications for some of you. You will receive a check from the University for the amount of your Robberson or GSS award, but not necessarily at the same time the money is deducted from your paycheck. We (the department and University) do not recommend that you charge anything to your travel card that you are paying for with GSS or Robberson awards, if at all possible.

7. The billing address for your travel card is 100 E. Boyd St. Room 510 Norman, OK 73019 and the department phone number is 405-325-5325. Click Submit to Business Officer and your application will move on to the Business Officer. The Director of Graduate Studies will let the Business Officer know that you have completed your training, and they will approve the application and move it on to the next step.

8. Shortly after the Business Officer approves your request, you will get an email from pcard@ou.edu asking you several follow-up questions. See below for those questions and some guidance on the answers:

1. Will you be traveling in the capacity of your role as a student or as an employee?
Because only graduate assistants can apply, the only successful answer here is “student employee.” You are employees of the University of Oklahoma as graduate assistants. Specify after “student employee” if you are a research assistant or teaching assistant currently

2. Is your travel related to a grant (i.e., paid on an SPNSR fund)?
If your assistantship is paid through a grant, then the answer to this is yes. You also can note here if you are paid through your advisor's start-up funds. Ask your advisor, if you are a GRA and not sure how you are funded.
3. If so, please provide the project number.
If the grant is managed by the college, your advisor will be able to provide this number, otherwise, leave it blank
4. Is your travel related to University research or your own research?
If you are presenting research that is only yours for a thesis or dissertation, indicate that it is your own research. If you are part of a team and what you are presenting is a portion of the team's work, or something you collaborated on for your advisor or a grant, it is University research (even if it is also part of your own research). If you can reasonably call it University research, do so.
5. Is your travel a required component of your job at the University?
If you are a GRA, the answer to this question is yes. Please write something like "Presenting my research is a required part of my research assistantship."
6. Is your travel a required component of the curriculum at the University?
The answer to this is likely no, unless you are currently in a class that requires you to present somewhere.
7. Were you awarded funds for this travel?
For whatever trip you are currently seeking a travel card, or whatever your next anticipated trip is, do you have, or plan to apply for, any form of funding? If so, say yes.
8. If so, what award was given?
List all awards you were granted and their amounts. This includes things that may be pending like Robberson, GSS, or College funds. It also might include money from the department or your advisor. If you are uncertain of the exact amount, you can estimate.
9. Is the University paying for all your travel?
When you think about everything that is included in your trip (airfare, hotel, registration, parking, ground transportation, food) is the amount from #8 enough to cover all of it?
10. If the University is paying for a portion of the travel, what is the maximum you are approved to spend?
If the answer to #9 was no, then list the total amount of awards you have listed in #8 (estimate if you have not heard an amount from some yet)

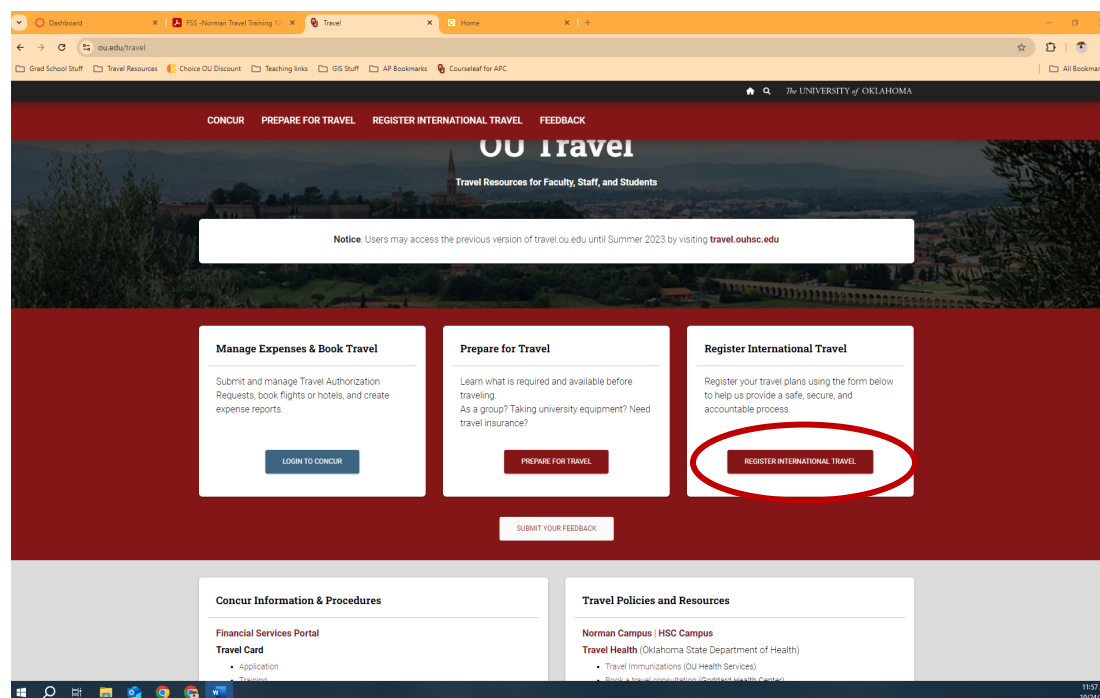
After you complete the form, you can ask the Business Officer or the Director of Graduate Studies to review it before you return it to the PCard office. Once you return it, the College will review your answers and provide a final decision on the approval of your card.

4.12.2 Travel Requests for Funded Travel

All students who are receiving funding from the University for travel must submit a request to travel through the [Concur System](#) **prior to travel**.

We encourage you to download and keep the PDF linked under Concur Information and Procedures (called Travel Authorization Request Procedure) at <https://travel.ou.edu>. This document provides good guidance not just on submitting a travel request, but also for booking travel and creating an expense report when you return. In addition, refer to this document, created by DGES, **as some departmental procedures are different from University procedures**. It will slow down the approval of your trip if department policies are not followed.

Also note that while the state only requires a travel request for out-of-state travel, we want to see a travel request from students **for all University sanctioned travel that the student is going to receive reimbursement and/or use their travel card (both in-state and out-of-state)**. It protects you and helps us to know how often you are traveling for research. Note that if your travel is international, you will need to not only file a Travel Request in Concur but also register your international travel using the appropriate link on the OU Travel site. International travel requests must be submitted at least 30 days prior to departure. Domestic travel should also be submitted 30 days prior to departure but will not be approved less than 14 days before unless you can document that it is a last-minute trip.



Travel requests do not need to be submitted prior to making hotel reservations, paying for registration, or buying airline or train tickets. It is better to wait until you know where the funding for your trip is coming from to file the travel request. That being said, before making any travel purchases with a University Travel card or asking the department to pay for travel, make sure you have a source of funding to cover the expenses.

Travel expenses incurred using the [University Fleet Services](#) (such as fleet car rental fees, tolls, or gas purchased with the fuel card or key provided with the car) are not submitted through Concur, but we would still like you to submit a travel request, so we can track the trip. If that same trip has other expenses, such as meals, hotel, or registration fees, those do need to be submitted through Concur, with a travel request.

Steps for Submitting a Travel Request

1. Go to <https://travel.ou.edu> and click on the box to log in to Concur. Use your OU 4x4 to log in. Click on the blue box on the left side of the screen that says Create and click Start a Request. You can also click Authorization Requests to see all the requests you currently have open and Create a New Request from that screen.
2. In the pop-up window that appears, complete all the fields with a star as well as the fields required by the department (Funding Source, travel cost estimates, and Comments (if necessary)). See below for guidance in completing these fields.

The screenshot displays the SAP Concur 'Create New Request' form. The form is organized into several sections. The top section includes fields for 'Event Name/Nature of Business', 'Business Travel Start Date', 'Business Travel End Date', 'Final Destination City', 'Trip Type', 'Request/Trip Purpose', 'Does this trip contain personal travel?', 'TRIP ID Number', and 'Dates of Personal Travel'. Below this is a section for 'Funding Source' and 'Offline Approval Attached?'. The next section contains 'Airfare Estimate', 'Lodging Estimate', 'Per Diem Estimate', 'Registration Estimate', 'Other Expenses Estimate', and 'Total Trip Estimate'. The bottom section is for 'Comment'. At the bottom right, there are 'Cancel' and 'Create Request' buttons. The footer shows 'Last signed in: 10/23/2024 10:52 am' and '© Copyright 2024 - SAP Concur - All Rights Reserved'.

Event Name/Nature of Business: This field is mostly to help you distinguish one trip from another, but make sure it is identifiable to the approvers as well. Use the conference name or a description, like “Fieldwork at the National Archives”.

Business Travel Start Date: This is the date you will start traveling. Be aware that if you are going to a conference, you will submit a copy of the conference agenda with your expense report. Your travel start date cannot be more than 24 hours before the conference begins, except in rare

circumstances where traveling 48 hours before will save the University money. If you are going to seek that exemption, make sure you have quotes for the airfare and hotel expenses both to travel 24 and 48 hours before to submit with the expense report. If you are requesting to travel more than 24 hours before, document why that is the case in the Comments box at the bottom of the screen.

Business Travel End Date: This is the date you will return to Norman (or the business travel ends, and OU is no longer responsible for expenses). The same policies about no more than 24 hours after the conference ends apply here, too.

Final Destination City: Where are you going for the conference or other travel?

Trip Type: Are you staying in Oklahoma, going to other places in the US or traveling internationally? Non-travel is not an option for a travel request. If you select it, the request will be denied.

Trip ID Number: You do not need to complete the Trip ID Number, unless you are traveling internationally. If the trip is international, you will put the registration number you receive after your international travel registration is approved in this field.

Request/Trip Purpose: Select the purpose of your travel. Most of you will be selecting Conference, Meeting, Research/Collaboration, or Training. Note that if you travel just for the day within Oklahoma (to OSU for a research meeting, for instance), you can only be reimbursed for your mileage on your personal vehicle. Meals are not included, unless you can verify that the meal facilitated you being able to work longer on the project.

Does the Trip Contain Personal Travel: Do your best to have this answer be no. Travel expense reports that include personal travel are much more complicated and require multiple pieces of documentation. Refer to OU's travel documentation for guidance on submitting an expense report for travel that contains personal travel. If you click yes for personal travel, you also need to submit the dates of personal travel. If you say yes to personal travel, include information (such as you are going to fly in one day early to visit friends and you will be covering the difference in the price of the flight) in the Comment box at the bottom or the request will be rejected.

Funding Source: Outline all the sources of funding you have for this trip. Include only funds that were approved. If a source of funds is still pending within 14 days of a trip, do not count on it covering your trip. List each source of funds separately. If you applied for something and was denied, it is still pending, or were not eligible, note that in the Comments box at the bottom. We will be looking for the status of Robberson awards, GSS awards, funding from the college travel award (AGS funds), your advisor or one of their sponsored projects, and AGGS funding awards. Do not put departmental support as a source of funding if you have not applied for it. Currently there is no additional departmental funding available for student travel except for specific meetings designated by the department (such as SWAAG, AAG, or AGU).

Note that the next six fields serve as a way to create a travel budget. We understand that unexpected expenses pop up, hotel rates change, etc. and this will not be the exact total on your expense report. It is just a way for us to compare your funding to your expenses.

Airfare Estimate: If you are flying, include either an estimate of airfare cost or the actual cost (if you already purchased the ticket).

Lodging Estimate: What is the total rate of your lodging for yourself (not necessarily the total rate for the room, if you are sharing).

Per Diem Estimate: Per diem is the amount you will spend on meals for the trip. There is a maximum set by the federal government based on the city or state you are going to. When you complete your expense report later the rates will be populated for you, so it is best to be aware now of what you can expect to be reimbursed for food. For travel in the US go to <https://gsa.gov/travel-resources> to get the rates (you will be redirected to another site for rates in Alaska and Hawaii) or to <https://aoprals.state.gov> for international travel. After you fill in the state name and year, scroll down in the table that appears to the section called Meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) rates and breakdown. Use the standard rate or the one for the specific city you are traveling to (if listed). Use the M&IE total for each day except for the first and last day of travel, which there is a value for in the table. Note that if a meal is included in your registration or as part of the hotel rate, you cannot claim it on the expense report, but you can include it in the request for ease of calculations.

Registration Estimate: What is the registration fee for the conference or event (if applicable)?

Other Expenses: This field might include ground transportation at the travel site, transportation to the airport here, parking at the airport, baggage fees, or a rental car. Do not include any OU fleet car expenses here. Put a total amount in this field and then in the Comments box list what is included in the other expenses. If you are running low on space in the Comments box, you do not need to list the individual costs of the items in this total.

Total Trip Estimate: This field does not auto-calculate. Add the other five fields and place that total in this field.

Comment: In addition to any comments about why there is personal travel, or why you are traveling more than 24 hours before or after the conference, as well as what other expenses were included in the estimate, also include all funding that was not approved or remains pending, as well as anything you did not apply for and why. There are examples of statements about pending, denied, and funding not applied for statements below. Others may be appropriate, and you are not limited to only these options.

Examples of what you should say in the Funding Source or Comments box regarding these various sources of funds (not inclusive):

Comments related to pending awards, denied awards, or awards not applied for should be in the Comments box. Only money that is secured should be listed in the Funding Source box.

Robberson/GSS awarded in the amount of x dollars

Robberson/GSS award pending, applied on this date

Robberson award denied on this date

Did not apply for Robberson/GSS award because I would like to apply for one next semester

AGS funds awarded in the amount of x dollars

AGS funds denied on this date

AGS fund depleted for year

Did not apply for AGS funds because I already received an award

My advisor is providing X number of dollars from a grant

My advisor is providing X number of dollars from other funds

My advisor does not have funds for me

I have funding from a project I am working on (be specific since this is money not from your advisor, likely)

I have funding from my own grant

I received an AGGS travel award in the amount of X dollars

AGGS travel award denied on this date

AGGS travel award pending, applied on this date

I did not apply for an AGGS travel award because I want to use it for future travel

AGGS travel fund is depleted

I am eligible for department funding (rare and only for designated meetings)

3. Check that all fields are complete and correct and then click Create Request. The request will appear in its final format with a Request ID assigned. If there are any errors, a red box with the alerts will appear at the top of the screen. Correct those errors and then click Submit Request. The request will be forwarded to the department approver for review and approval or return for corrections. Note that if your request is approved, you will not get an email, but you will be able to see it change status to approved in Concur at some point. You cannot submit an expense report for a trip that does not have an approved travel request.

4.12.3 Travel Expense Reports

After a student returns from travel, for which they are receiving funds (other than those paid as a scholarship, such as GSS or Robberson), they must submit a travel expense report through the [Concur system](#). Students can submit the report themselves but are encouraged to gather their materials in a digital format and contact Shared Business Services (sbsc@ou.edu) for help in submitting their expense report. The DGES financial administrative assistant can provide guidance on contacting SBSC, as well as necessary codes for any DGES funds the student is receiving.

5. EXPECTATIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

All graduate students admitted into the DGES graduate program should review and abide by the policies and practices outlined in the [Graduate College Bulletin](#) (GCB) and this document. Some useful sections of the GCB include:

- ☐ Academic Leave of Absence policies and procedures are detailed in GCB Section 3.6.3.
- ☐ Information about Holidays and Paid Time Off is detailed in GCB Section 4.3.4.10
- ☐ Information about Paid Parental Leave is detailed in GCB Section 4.3.4.12
- ☐ Information for Masters students is detailed in GCB Section 7
- ☐ Information for Doctoral students is detailed in GCB Section 8

Students whose thesis or dissertation research may involve any of the following should promptly contact the appropriate office for advice:

- ☐ Human subjects: Contact the [Institutional Review Board](#).
- ☐ Vertebrate animals: Contact the [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee](#).

It is the responsibility of the graduate student to retain copies of all signed forms as you progress towards your degree. These forms are increasingly available online, and you're strongly encouraged to take advantage of the option to save the submitted form as a PDF.

5.1 Expectations for all students

Please remember that your success as a graduate student depends on other students, faculty and staff in diverse ways, and we all benefit when DGES is a positive, supportive, collegial and productive scholarly environment. To sustain this community, all graduate students are expected to be fully engaged citizens of DGES. This includes attending department events such as colloquia, when possible, and helping fellow graduate students when necessary, providing feedback on their writing and presentations, fully participating in lab or research group meetings, mentoring younger colleagues, and setting a high standard of behavior that others can emulate. This also includes ensuring the security of not only your belongings and self, but other students. Be sure to close office doors when you leave, if they are empty, and do not leave doors to shared spaces open overnight. Detailed suggestions and guidance for being fully engaged citizens are provided in the *Advising Agreement Between Graduate Students and Faculty* (Included in Appendix E and available on the [DGES Grad Students Teams Channel](#)), which all students must sign during their first semester.

As soon as the OU Graduate College (GC) provides you with access to an OU email (see the official admittance email you receive from GC), begin checking it regularly. Be on the lookout for information regarding the DGES Graduate Student Orientation just before the start of your first semester, which ALL DGES graduate students must attend. In the event that you are unable to attend, immediately inform your advisor and work with the DGES Director of Graduate Studies to make alternative arrangements.

Our graduate students are expected to be aware of and participate in departmental events and professional opportunities when possible. These events are advertised through social media and

email listservs associated with DGES, College of Atmospheric & Geographic Sciences, and [Graduate Student Life](#).

Graduate students are also expected to be fiscally responsible with departmental resources. If you are using department travel funding, consider sharing rooms or selecting the least cost form of travel to stretch your funding award. Additionally, there are often opportunities for graduate students to escort guest speakers or candidates for faculty positions to meals. If you are offered that opportunity, please be mindful of University spending limits for meals (typically \$25 per person for breakfast, \$40 for lunch, and \$80 for dinner inclusive of tips, tax, and service fees). Students who are using a travel card to pay for the meal must obtain a tax-exempt certificate from the front office staff to use when paying the bill and should tip the servers appropriately (18 to 20 percent). Note that OU policy will not pay tips above 20% of the bill.

5.2 Expectations for All Graduate Assistants

Graduate assistants are expected to submit their timesheets at the appointed time for supervisor approval. The timesheets are prepopulated with the appropriate hours based on their assigned FTE (see section 5.3.2 for more details on various FTE appointments). The prepopulated time should not be altered without a conversation with the Director of Graduate Studies. Paid holidays and weather closures will be populated for you. GAs are entitled to 30 hours of paid time off for those with 9-month appointments or 40 hours of paid time off for those with 12-month appointments, but those hours are tracked in the department, not through the University payroll system. We trust you to use your paid time off wisely and in consultation with your supervisor.

5.3 Expectations for Graduate Teaching Assistants

5.3.1 Types of GTA appointments

There are two types of GTA appointments in DGES: **supporting** and **instructor of record**. The majority of GTAs hold supporting appointments.

Supporting appointments are those in which the GTA supports the primary instructor of the course. Responsibilities for supporting appointments are determined on a course-by-course basis through consultation with the primary instructor in advance of the semester and may include:

- Grading of course assignments
- Leading a discussion or laboratory section
- Holding office hours
- Communicating with students through email
- If the GTA is eligible to serve as instructor of record, a supporting appointment may *occasionally* include giving lectures in the primary instructor's absence. In such cases, the primary instructor is responsible for providing all necessary materials such as slides or handwritten notes to the GTA well in advance. Lectures independently developed by the GTA are possible, but the effort required to do so must result in a reduction of regular responsibilities so that the total workload does not increase.

Instructor of record appointments are those in which the GTA is the primary instructor of the course. They can be in-person or online and occur both during the regular fall/spring semesters as well as in summer. Responsibilities for instructor of record appointments typically include:

- Developing and providing a syllabus for the course
- Developing/procuring and presenting course materials (composed of one or more of the following: slides, handwritten notes, publications, excerpts from textbooks, miscellaneous media, a Canvas page)
- Developing, administering, and grading all assignments in the course; or developing a rubric for supporting GTAs.
- Holding weekly office hours (required) and being otherwise routinely available to the students for questions on business days (including prompt response to email, use of Canvas, etc.)
- Submitting course grades

Instructors of record must be PhD students and are usually senior students who have completed general exams. See Section 3.4 of this document for guidance on how requests for instructors of record are handled. For a student to be an instructor of record, their advisor must agree to the arrangement. The Director of Graduate Studies will attempt to distribute opportunities to provide as many students as possible with a chance to teach, if they want one, during their degree program.

5.3.2 Expectations for effort

Most GTA appointments in DGES are a full-time equivalency (FTE) load of 0.5 FTE, where 1 FTE = 40 hours per week. If you hold a 0.5 FTE GTA appointment, you should average 20 hours per week of work for your GTA position. Other GTA appointments may be 0.7 FTE (28 hours per week), 0.2 FTE (8 hours per week), or 0.25 FTE (10 hours per week). Note that if you are assigned more than one course as part of FTE load, it may not always work out that each course is exactly $1/n$ courses you are assigned of your time (i.e. if you are 0.5 FTE and have two classes each one does not necessarily receive 10 hours of your time), but the combined effort of all the courses you are assigned should not exceed your total expected hours for the week. The Director of Graduate Studies makes efforts to work with faculty to know how many hours a week they expect the workload of the GTA to be and then makes assignments to distribute those variances fairly across all GTAs. GTAs should track their own time and report the findings to the Director of Graduate Studies, especially if there are extreme variations from the norm for a particular class (both well more and well less than the average of 10 hours a week).

For GTA appointments, the weekly workload can fluctuate considerably as the frequency of course assignments vary. Some tasks (e.g. grading exams) are often concentrated in certain periods of the semester. Your GTA appointment may require you to work more than 20 hours per week in some weeks, as long as the average hours worked per week does not exceed your FTE expectation. It is therefore important for GTAs to carefully budget and manage their time, preparing in advance of expected variations in workload so that remaining academic activities do not lead to excessive strain/stress.

If you find yourself routinely putting in more than the expected number of weekly hours based on your appointment level, you must reach out to find a solution. You may wish to discuss your

appointment with: i) other students who have recently held or currently hold a similar appointment; ii) the primary instructor of the course; and/or iii) the DGES Director of Graduate Studies. For supporting GTA appointments, regular communication with the primary instructor regarding the level of effort required to support the course is strongly encouraged so that responsibilities and workload can be adjusted, if necessary, to best support the course. Sometimes the GTA's level of attention to grading is more than the primary instructor expects, and they can help you to grade more efficiently. If you are regularly working more than the expected number of hours, we will find a solution. Please say something. Most frequently we do not know there is an issue and will correct it as soon as it is identified.

Particularly with large undergraduate courses, it is common for students to unintentionally overburden GTAs with emails and questions, rather than the primary instructor of the course. If communication with the students (email or otherwise) begins to consume time best spent on the GTA's main responsibilities, please discuss the issue with the primary instructor for the course. The primary instructor should be flexible to revising agreed-upon responsibilities as needed so that the highest priority support for the course is met within the constraints of the appointment level.

Regular bookkeeping of efforts that can be shared with the primary instructor is encouraged. To minimize the burden of developing course content, course materials are expected to be shared among students who are/have been assigned as GTAs to a given course. For example, 1000-level labs typically are written already, and prior GTAs know where students struggle; this knowledge should be shared among GTAs so that we can best serve our students. Remember that part of being a graduate student is being collegial to your fellow graduate students.

5.3.3 Student mental health

The mental health of you and your students is important to us. Stress from classes, work, family, and other issues can weigh heavily on all of us. It is not your responsibility to assess anyone's mental health, but if you see a student struggling, if they were excelling and suddenly are having problems, or if you see any other signs that something might be wrong, please send a report to OU's Behavior Intervention Team (<https://www.ou.edu/normanbit>). If you are personally struggling with mental health issues, please talk to someone. We know that GTA positions have additional stresses and want to help. Resources to support your health and well-being are detailed in Section 4.8 of this document.

5.3.4 Other GTA policies

If a student will miss class for which they are a GTA, and they are required to attend class as part of their GTA assignment, please notify the primary instructor and seek approval to miss class. Absences should be confined to illness, primary caretaker responsibilities, civic responsibilities (jury duty), or conflicts related to other duties of being a graduate student (research, general exams, conference presentations). Absences must be approved by the primary instructor before any classes are missed (except in the case of emergencies or unexpected illness). Extended absences from class require written consent of the instructor and notification of the Director of Graduate Studies. Per the GCB, Section 4.3.4.10, GTAs should attempt to use paid time off during times that classes are **not** in session.

Although it may be possible to fulfill some GTA assignments remotely (e.g. if the work is primarily grading), DGES cannot guarantee a remote GTA position to any student. Thus, all students on a GTA contract should plan to be physically present in Norman to serve as a GTA in person. Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the Chair of DGES when it is in the professional interest of the student to hold a remote GTA position (e.g. the student is based elsewhere while conducting fieldwork for their thesis or dissertation). If you are granted a remote work position that requires your residence of record for tax purposes to move out of the state of Oklahoma, you will be required by HR to file Out-of-State or Out-of-Country remote work forms that require multiple layers of approval outside the department.

In order to hold a GTA position, international students who do not have citizenship and received education in a country on [the list of OU-approved native English-speaking countries](#), must have their English skills certified through the [Graduate College's English Training and Certification Services \(ETCS\)](#). Be aware that this testing process costs \$50 and the department will pay this fee for individuals who have been ranked for funding through a GTA position. The level at which you receive certification (A, B, C, D) determines the types of GTA assignments you can take. If ETCS recommends any training or support to improve your score, please utilize those services. They are free to you. You may be encouraged to retake the test to improve your score or to serve as an instructor of record and the department will cover the fees for those tests as well. Please note that GTAs who hold citizenship in countries on the list of approved English-speaking countries may be asked to meet with the ETCS staff prior to holding an instructor of record position.

Most course policies that you must abide by as a GTA are outlined in the [OU Faculty Handbook \(OUFH\)](#), which is referenced below. If you ever question whether an element of your course abides by OU policy, ask the DGES Director of Graduate Studies or another regular faculty member. Important policies include:

- Do not discuss or disclose student enrollment or performance information within anyone but the individual student (see [FERPA law](#)) and the instructor of record
- Assignments worth more than 10% of a student's grade may not be assigned during prefinals week, with some unique exceptions (see [Final Exam Preparation Period Policy](#) of the OUFH)
- Provide the syllabus by the first day of the semester (see [Course Syllabi & Other Course Materials Policy](#) of the OUFH)
- Provide grades for assignments within 2 weeks of their due date, ideally via Canvas
- Do not reschedule course times for any reason without prior approval of the DGES Chair, Dean, and Provost
- Uphold academic integrity in your course. Any suspected violations of OU's integrity policy should be immediately reported via the *Academic Misconduct Reporting Form* found on the OU Academic Integrity website's [Faculty section](#) (along with other resources)
- As a mandatory reporter, you must report any instances of assault, harassment, and abuse that you become aware of (see responsibilities and guidelines outlined in detail at [OU Institutional Equity Office's website](#))
- Meet final grade reporting deadlines (you should receive emails about this in advance, but check the Academic Calendar to be sure)

If you find yourself unable to abide by one or more of these policies for any reason, please notify the DGES Director of Graduate Studies as soon as possible. Any GTA who regularly fails to satisfy policy and meet expectations of DGES may not be considered for GTA support in future semesters.

All GTAs are expected to:

1. Become familiar with the rules and procedures contained with the GCB Section 4.3
2. Be available and work up to 20 hours a week throughout the academic year (approximately August 15 to May 15) *unless* the OU campus is closed (e.g., public holidays, Winter Break, weather emergencies). Absences must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.
3. Understand employee obligations under health care regulations (e.g., the Affordable Care Act).

5.3.5 Resources for GTAs

[Canvas online learning management tool](#) (a digital space for you to organize your course, post copies of the syllabus and other course materials, communicate with students, record grades, etc.) - Start organizing and adding materials at least one week prior to the start of class, and update often. If you are the instructor of record, [University policy](#) requires you to use this to manage your course. As GTAs you will be added to the Canvas course of all your assigned sections each semester. There is an excellent service [Canvas Support page](#) that can help learn all the cool things Canvas can do.

[Center for Faculty Excellence](#) – Unless otherwise specified as “faculty only” graduate students are welcome to participate in any of the teaching workshops and communities sponsored by the Center for Faculty Excellence.

[Instructional and Professional Development Center \(IPDC\)](#) - Supports graduate students and postdocs through various self-paced microcredential courses that range in focus from effective leadership, communication, and networking to instructional competencies. The coursework is free.

[New GTA training](#) (required Graduate College course to be completed by all first-time TAs) – Supports graduate students and provides students with both an online and in-person component to help you become an effective GTA and navigate the requirements of OU.

5.4 Expectations for Graduate Research Assistants

Work with your advisor to:

1. Become familiar with the rules and procedures contained with the GCB Section 4.3
2. Be available and work up to 20 hours a week throughout the academic year (approximately August 15 to May 15) *unless* the OU campus is closed (e.g., public holidays, Winter Break, weather emergencies). Absences must be approved by the research supervisor.
3. Understand employee obligations under health care regulations (e.g., the Affordable Care Act).
4. If your GRA is a component of a team project, discuss with your advisor their expectations for authorship, co-authorship, and collaboration with others on the project team.

5.4.1 Resources for GRAs

[Instructional and Professional Development Center \(IPDC\)](#) - Supports graduate students and postdocs through various self-paced microcredential courses that range in focus from effective leadership, communication, and networking to instructional competencies. The coursework is free.

5.5 Academic Integrity

Graduate students must uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. It is the responsibility of each student to be familiar with the definitions, policies, and procedures concerning academic misconduct. These are explained in [A Student's Rights and Responsibilities](#). The [Academic Integrity Code](#) defines academic misconduct as any act which improperly affects the evaluation of a student's academic performance or achievement.

Academic misconduct reports fall into two categories, admonitions (warnings) and violations. A graduate student who has received a report of violation in a course may not drop the course in which the report has been made, unless the report is dismissed. If you fail a course because of an academic integrity violation, your tuition waiver will not cover you retaking the course. Complete information about academic integrity and student resources is available at the [OU Academic Integrity website](#).

6. Office Space

Office space and computers for GTAs and GRAs are assigned by the Director of Graduate Studies with the support of the front office staff. The DGES front office staff handle distribution and return of related keys.

6.1 Office space, lockers, mailboxes, desk check-in and check-out procedures

All students supported on a GRA through DGES or a GTA (through any department) will be given a desk in the Sarkeys Energy Center (SEC). Students who are not supported on a GTA or DGES GRA be given a desk, if one is available. When assigning desks to students not supported on a GRA/GTA, priority will be given to PhD students, then MA/MS students pursuing a degree with a thesis, and then MA/MS students pursuing a coursework-based degree. Per the OU policy on office space, graduate students (like faculty and staff) are only permitted to have one office on campus. If your GRA is through another department, please request a desk in the department or research group that is funding you.

If you have a desk in another building but would like a place to safely store your belongings when you are in SEC for class or other DGES activities, contact the front office staff to see if there are any lockers available. There is a set of lockers in the common kitchen space on the 4th floor that can securely store a small backpack, a briefcase, or a purse. Lockers can be signed out to a student for a semester or longer. You will be issued a key for the kitchen and the locker for the duration of time you are using the locker.

All students who are assigned office space in SEC will also be assigned a mailbox in the shared kitchen space on the 4th floor. If you have a need for a mailbox (i.e. AGGS officers or other service positions), but do not have a desk assignment, enquire at the front desk if there are mailboxes still available. If there are, we will assign you one for the duration of the service assignment. You will need to access the mailbox during regular business hours when the kitchen door is open.

Students who are assigned office space in SEC will be listed on printed directory signage on the 4th, 5th, and 6th floor of SEC. If you have privacy concerns about being listed on this signage, please speak to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Guidelines for assigning desks:

- 1) Where possible, students who share the same faculty advisor will be grouped together.
- 2) Whenever possible, we will avoid changing students' desk assignments. However, it may be necessary to change desk or office assignments as students enter and leave the graduate program. You may be asked if you would like to change to another office to be with other students working with your faculty advisor, but you will not be required to move, except in extreme circumstances.
- 3) We will not be able to accommodate requests from students for particular desks or offices. However, if harassment or other problematic behaviors occur among students in your office space, please contact the DGES Director of Graduate Studies. If the problem persists, the offending student will be moved (among other potential consequences).

Upon being assigned a new desk, please proceed through the following check-in procedure:

- 1) Request necessary keys from the front office staff and make sure that you are able to access not only your own office, but common spaces on the fourth floor, such as the kitchen or lounge area.
- 2) Check your desk and other equipment. You should have, at minimum, a desk, office chair, and computer with monitor(s), keyboard, and mouse. The desk should have been emptied by the prior resident, but if you find anything in there (other than leftover supplies), contact the front desk for help in disposing of it. Any old student work should be placed in a container for shredding (located in the main office and the 6th floor kitchen). If your desk has an electronic lock, contact the DGES IT person to help you reset the code. Make sure your chair and desk are in functioning order. Report any problems to the front office staff. Check to make sure all parts of your computer are working. See section 6.3 for how to report technology issues.

Upon graduation from the program, or at the end of your GRA/GTA funding, please proceed through the following check-out procedure:

- 1) Clean-out your desk. If there are supplies that you do not want, you can leave those in the desk, but remove any personal items, food or trash, and any materials related to your GA assignment. Books that the department bought you or you do not want to take should be placed in the 4th floor lounge area for other students to claim. If you have graded papers or blank exams, make sure they are returned to the professor or placed in the bin in the main office or 6th floor kitchen for shredding (if they are more than 2 years old or the professor has left OU). Your desk should be

empty, except for the computer, when you leave. Please wipe out the desk drawers and wipe off the top of the desk so it is ready for the next student.

2) Return your keys to the front office staff

6.2 Locker and Office Keys

The keys that you are given upon being assigned a desk or locker are the property of DGES. They are expensive to have made, so please treat them as you would with any key to your possessions. If you do not return them upon vacating your desk or locker, we can charge you a fee to replace them.

Access to SEC outside of business hours and the DGES lab spaces on the first floor are obtained using your [Sooner card](#). Either a virtual or physical version of it will work. If your Sooner Card will not open outside doors that have a card scanner or any of the lab doors that you need for your GRA or GTA assignment, please let the front office staff know and they will help you.

6.3 Technology and Printing

Each student with an office assignment will have a desktop computer with monitor(s), keyboard, and mouse. These belong to the department and must stay on the desk in your SEC office space. If you have a reason to have your computer moved to another space outside your SEC office, contact the Director of Graduate Studies. This would be a rare accommodation, and the computer must stay on the OU Norman campus.

The department has some laptops and other computer equipment that can be borrowed for research purposes, classroom teaching assignments, or conference travel. The DGES IT person can help with those arrangements.

If your DGES computer is not functioning properly (freezes, crashes, slow), please submit a [help ticket](#) to OU IT. The DGES IT person will be tasked to check the machine. Please do not email them to ask for help. The help ticket system is designed to track their time and ensure that all requests are addressed in a timely fashion. Emailing the IT person directly circumvents that system.

If your DGES technology is not sufficient for your research needs, first talk to your advisor. They may have funds to help you address the issue. Then talk to the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss other solutions.

Any technology purchases that you make using OU funds (from a grant or an award like the AGGS Research Award) is property of the University of Oklahoma. You may be asked to surrender the item upon completion of your degree.

Students in DGES have access to department printers and copiers. Ask fellow students or your advisor if you need help using printing codes. The department has its own poster printer on the 6th floor that you can use to print posters for department-related events. The form to request poster printing can be found [here](#). Generally, the department will cover the cost of the printing for you. You need a funding code when you complete the request form. This may come for your advisor

or the Director of Graduate Studies. If you need a code from the Director of Graduate Studies, please include the conference or other activity for which you plan to use the poster in your email request.

6.4 Security

Security of office space and shared graduate student spaces is everyone's responsibility. SEC is a large building that is open for extended hours because of the Energy Library on the second floor. Protect yourself, your belongings, and others by being aware of your surroundings and people who do not belong. Close office doors when you leave, if the office is empty, even if you are just going to the restroom. Common space doors will be closed outside business hours by the front office staff. Do not reopen and prop those doors open outside business hours. If you are in your office outside business hours and see someone who does not belong, close yourself into your office and call Campus Police at (405) 325-1717. If you feel threatened, call 911.

7. ANNUAL EVALUATIONS

7.1 Annual progress reports

All students are required to submit a *Graduate Student Progress and Scholarship Report* before February 1 each year. Graduate students should work with their academic advisor to prepare and submit this form. A copy of the form is found in Appendix E of this guide as well as on the [DGES Grad Student Teams Channel](#). Failure to complete the *Progress and Scholarship Report Form* will result in an unsatisfactory evaluation for the year and may jeopardize your eligibility for funding.

7.2 Satisfactory academic progress

The DGES Graduate Committee and the OU Graduate College will review the progress of all graduate students annually. Making satisfactory progress toward a graduate degree includes, but is not limited to:

- ☐ Timely completion of the coursework required for the degree
- ☐ Submission of official degree audits through Stellic (Masters) or Advisory Conference Report (PhD)
- ☐ Progress made in completing research
- ☐ Timely completion of the non-thesis examination or general examination
- ☐ Timely completion of the thesis or dissertation defense or final submission

In addition, DGES graduate students must earn an A or B grade in core required courses – GEOG 6953 and GEOG 6973. Master's students also need to earn an A or B grade in the required methods course: GEOG 5313 (for MA students) or GIS 5923 (for MS students).

7.3 Academic warning

The Graduate College will send an academic warning to a student whose graduate GPA for the term is less than 3.00. A student who has received an academic warning is not in good academic standing. The student may return to good academic standing by earning a graduate GPA equal to or greater than 3.00 in the next term of enrollment.

7.4 Enrollment stop

The Graduate College will stop a student's enrollment if any of the following applies:

- ❑ The student's graduate GPA for the term is less than 3.00 and their record shows a graduate term GPA below 3.00 for one or more of the last two terms of enrollment.
- ❑ The student receives a grade of *U* in two consecutive terms.
- ❑ The student receives two unsatisfactory term or annual evaluations from DGES

The graduate liaison may recommend that the student be permitted to continue in the program. In order to recommend continuation, the graduate liaison must propose a plan to remedy the academic situation. The plan will be developed in coordination with the student's advisor and committee (if established). The plan should:

- ❑ Identify strategies to mitigate or resolve any factors that are negatively impacting the student's academic progress, which may include mentorship and advising strategies to support the student's successful completion.
- ❑ Outline all criteria necessary for the student to be judged as making satisfactory progress toward the degree.
- ❑ Outline specific expectations for enrollment, grades, progress, and research/degree milestones in current and/or future term(s).
- ❑ Include input from the student's major professor and thesis/doctoral committee, if applicable.

The dean of the Graduate College will approve or disapprove the recommendation or investigate further.

7.5 Dismissal from program

The Graduate College will dismiss a student from their graduate program if any of the following applies:

- ❑ The student's enrollment was previously stopped, and the graduate liaison does not recommend continuation.
- ❑ The student's enrollment was previously stopped, and they have failed to fulfill the criteria outlined in the approved plan for continuation.
- ❑ The student has failed the second attempt of the non-thesis examination or doctoral general examination.
- ❑ The student has failed the thesis or dissertation defense.
- ❑ The student has accumulated 9 or more credit hours of C, D, and/or F grades at any level in any combination as a doctoral student.

8. MASTERS DEGREE PROGRAM

8.1 Timeline and key milestones

Masters students are required to complete all degree requirements within five calendar years from initial enrollment, although there is a process for requesting an extension (see GCB Section 7.1.6.1 for details). Specific deadlines for the degree are found on the OU Graduate College's [Steps to a Degree](#) and in the GCB Section 7.7 (for Thesis) or Section 7.8 (for Non-Thesis)

8.2 Coursework

All Masters students (thesis and non-thesis) must trace a suitable coursework trajectory that takes the student to the end of the degree program. If your coursework deviates significantly from the standard path (e.g. you need to substitute the required methods course because you took it as an undergraduate at OU or you have multiple courses outside the department), it is your responsibility to notify the Director of Graduate Studies of those decisions, including your committee on that correspondence, so the permissibility of the deviations can be verified. You will also need to initiate a request for a substitution within Stellic (See section 8.8 for more details on Stellic). Be aware that when Stellic uses the term “Advisor”, it refers to the graduate liaison, not your actual advisor.

Degree-specific Program of Study forms are available here and on the [DGES Grad Student Teams Channel](#):

- [MA in Geography and Environmental Sustainability](#)
- MS in Geography and Environmental Sustainability, *with 2 concentrations*:
 - [Environmental Systems](#)
 - [Geospatial Technologies](#)

These are no longer submitted to the Graduate College as official documents but can be useful in helping you plan your path and communicate deviations to the graduate liaison before the official degree audit is completed. You can also do the same thing within Stellic.

Note that **no more than half** of your coursework can be comprised of S/U graded classes. For more information about course credit limitations, see GCB Section 7.1.5.

Petitions may be made to substitute alternative courses for specific required courses. The petition process begins when a student works with their advisor to formulate a specific request. The advisor should email this request to the Director of Graduate Studies, explaining and justifying exceptions to Graduate College rules (such as substitutions for required courses). The Director of Graduate Studies may then use this request to petition the Graduate College on behalf of the student.

Sometimes a petition regarding coursework requires an add/drop form. When graduate students need to submit an add/drop form, they work closely with their advisor to determine the necessary changes documented on the add/drop form, but the Director of Graduate Studies signs the form as “advisor” and the Dean of Graduate College signs the form as Dean.

8.3 Forming your thesis committee

Before the end of their second semester, full-time thesis Master’s students should work with their advisor to identify a thesis topic and two other faculty members who are well suited and are willing and able to serve on the student’s thesis committee. A majority of the committee members must hold an RM1, RM2, RM3, or RM4 graduate faculty appointment within DGES, or have SM status and count toward DGES majority (rare – check with the Director of Graduate Studies to find out who these are). The chair of the committee must hold RM3 or RM4 status. It is possible to have a non-DGES faculty member as the third member of your thesis committee, but they too must be members of the graduate faculty at OU. A list of faculty members with OU faculty status is located [here](#).

If you and your advisor identify a researcher not affiliated with OU as an ideal committee member, then work with the Director of Graduate Studies to determine the feasibility of adding them to your committee. The rule still applies that the majority of your committee must count toward DGES department majority (meaning they have RM 1-4 status or have a special exemption).

Information on the thesis topic and committee membership must be recorded on a *Master's Thesis Topic and Committee Membership* form (found on [here](#)). This form must be signed by all committee members, the student, and the Director of Graduate Studies; and then submitted to the Graduate College. Please note that this form is commonly submitted at the same time as a Master's student's request to graduate in Stellic (see section 8.2 above and 8.8 below for more information about Stellic) – before the end of the fourth week of their third semester.

If a student's advisor leaves OU or is no longer able or willing to serve as the student's advisor, the student must find a new faculty advisor within three months. The Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Committee will assist the student in identifying an advisor. M.A. and M.S. students who do not wish to find a new advisor may switch to the non-thesis degree but will still need to identify a committee to administer the non-thesis exam. Students pursuing a thesis-based M.A. and M.S. degree who do not have a faculty advisor after three months will receive an unsatisfactory progress letter and lose any departmental GTA support.

8.4 Requirement for annual committee meetings

Beginning in the second year of their program, all graduate students must meet with their full thesis committee annually (i.e., before the end of spring semester). The annual evaluation form will ask students to confirm that they have met with their committee during the last academic year.

8.5 Thesis proposal

The department requires that students have their thesis proposal and a related timeline approved by their committee before the end of the fourth week of their third semester. There are no departmental requirements for the format and content of the proposal. Talk with your thesis advisor and committee regarding their expectations for the thesis proposal, as well as the way(s) in which you should share it with your committee. The department does not require Master's students to publicly present their thesis proposal.

8.6 Comprehensive exam for non-thesis students

By the end of their third semester, non-thesis Master's students should identify a faculty member who is willing to serve as the Chair of the student's non-thesis exam committee, who holds an RM2, RM3, or RM4 status. The student should work with this faculty member to select two other suitable and available faculty members to serve on the non-thesis exam committee. A majority of the committee members must hold an RM1, RM2, RM3, or RM4 graduate faculty appointment within DGES. It is possible to have a non-DGES faculty member as the third member of your non-thesis committee, but they too must be members of the graduate faculty at OU. A list of faculty members with OU faculty status is located [here](#).

Students are **strongly encouraged** to meet with each non-thesis exam committee member individually to discuss the content and format of the student's non-thesis exam before the start of the semester during which a student expects to take their non-thesis exam.

At the start of the semester that you expect to undertake the non-thesis exam, your non-thesis exam committee Chair must work with the DGES graduate liaison to request permission from the Graduate College to conduct the exam (details can be found in Section 7.3 of the GCB).

Upon permission being granted by the Graduate College for the non-thesis examination to be administered, the exam committee will receive an Authority to Report form. After the completion of the exam, the committee has up to four weeks to grade the non-thesis exam. Once they meet to determine the result of the exam, the Authority to Report form must be returned to the Graduate College within one week or the end of the semester deadline set in the [Steps to Degree](#).

8.6 Submitting papers for publication

If a paper will be included in a student's thesis, all members of the thesis committee must be given the opportunity to review that paper before it is submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. Prior to submission, the student should send the final version of the paper to all committee members. Committee members should aim to assent to the submission or give the student constructive feedback within two weeks. If more time is needed, the committee member and student should agree upon an alternative timeline. Reviewing a student's paper does not in itself warrant co-authorship on that paper for the committee member. At their first committee meeting, graduate students are encouraged to have a discussion with their committee about expectations for co-authorship.

8.7 Final steps: Thesis defense and completing your thesis

Congratulations on being close to completing your thesis! Please be aware that there are a number of important deadlines and forms related to defending and completing your thesis. **Failure to meet these deadlines will delay your graduation.** Please see Section 10 of this document, "Completing Your Thesis or Dissertation" for details.

8.8 Resources for Masters Students

A guide to using Stellic can be found [here](#). Not only is there information on how to complete the Request to Graduate, but also ways to use Stellic to track your progress in the program. Remember that when Stellic refers to an "advisor" they mean the graduate liaison, not your faculty advisor.

If at any time you notice that there are areas of your degree audit in Stellic that are showing as unfulfilled, but you have already completed them, you can submit a student-initiated request for a degree exception within Stellic. You can also discuss the issue with the Director of Graduate Studies, and they should be able to help you resolve it.

9. DOCTORAL DEGREE PROGRAM

9.1 Timeline and key milestones

All doctoral students should locate and abide by the Graduate College's [guidance on degree completion](#). As indicated in Section 8.2.6 of the GCB, all degree requirements must be completed within five calendar years after passing the General Exam, although there is a process for requesting an extension (see Section 8.2.6.1 of GCB for details).

9.2 Coursework

Before the end of the second semester, PhD students should work with their advisor to trace a suitable coursework trajectory that takes the student to the end of the degree program and prepares them to undertake research and prepare a successful dissertation. See the [doctoral degree check sheet](#) for details on required courses.

Note that no more than 49% of your coursework may be comprised of transfer credit hours. See Section 8.2.3 of the GCB for details. Likewise, no more than half of your coursework can be comprised of S/U graded classes. See Section 8.2.5.2 of the GCB.

You can enroll in dissertation hours (GEOG 6890) for the first time during the semester you take your general exam, unless your advisory committee deems it necessary for you to pursue more coursework before enrolling in GEOG 6890.

Petitions may be made to substitute alternative courses for specific required courses. The petition process begins when a student works with their advisor to formulate a specific request. The advisor emails this request to the Director of Graduate Studies, explaining and justifying exceptions to Graduate College rules (such substitutions for required courses). The Director of Graduate Studies may then use this request to petition the Graduate College on behalf of the student.

Sometimes a petition regarding coursework requires an add/drop form. When graduate students need to submit an add/drop form, they work closely with their advisor to determine the necessary changes documented on the add/drop form, but the Director of Graduate Studies signs the form as “advisor” and the Dean of Graduate College signs the form as Dean.

9.3 Forming your dissertation committee

Before the end of the third semester, the student must identify a dissertation topic, a chair, and at least three other faculty members who are well suited, willing, and able to serve on student’s dissertation committee. A majority of the committee members must hold an RM1, RM2, RM3, or RM4 graduate faculty appointment within DGES, or have SM status and count toward DGES majority (rare – check with the Director of Graduate Studies to find out who these are). The chair of the committee must hold RM4 status. A list of faculty members with OU faculty status is located [here](#).

If you and your advisor identify a researcher not affiliated with OU as an ideal committee member, then work with the Director of Graduate Studies to determine the feasibility of adding them to your committee. The rule still applies that the majority of your committee must count toward DGES department majority (meaning they have RM 1-4 status or have a special exemption).

At least one committee member must be a graduate faculty member from outside DGES. The Graduate College refers to this committee member as the “Graduate College representative” because their primary role is to represent the Graduate College’s policies and procedures (see Section 8.3.1.2 of the GCB to learn more about the Graduate College representative’s role).

Should you wish to change your advisor or committee membership, see Section 8.4.1 of the GCB. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that both the old and new committees, as well as the DGES Director of Graduate Studies, are aware of changes.

Students must identify a faculty advisor within three months of the start of their program. If a student's advisor leaves OU or is no longer able or willing to serve as the student's advisor, the student must find a new faculty advisor within three months. The Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Committee will assist the student in identifying an advisor. Ph.D. students who do not have a faculty advisor after three months will receive an unsatisfactory progress letter and lose any departmental GTA support.

Your first full committee meeting typically constitutes the Advisory Conference required by the OU Graduate College. The Advisory Conference Report (ACR; located in the [Doctoral Forms](#) section of the Graduate College website) must be submitted to the Graduate College before the semester when general exam will be taken. The ACR lists coursework taken and planned for the PhD degree and must be approved by your dissertation committee. There is a deadline by which this form must be first filed on the [Steps to Degree page](#). There then are subsequent deadlines by which it must be updated. Missed deadlines will require a petition to the Graduate College that is sent by the Director of Graduate Studies. A student must work with their advisor to formulate a request for tardy paperwork to be accepted that explains and justifies the late submission. The advisor emails this request to the Director of Graduate Studies, who may use it to petition the Graduate College on behalf of the student.

9.4 Requirement for annual committee meetings

Beginning in the second year of their program, all graduate students must meet with their full dissertation committee annually (i.e. before the end of spring semester). The annual evaluation form will ask students to confirm that they have met with their committee during the last academic year.

9.5 Dissertation proposal

The department requires that PhD students publicly present their dissertation proposal and that their doctoral committee approves of the dissertation proposal. The presentation of a dissertation proposal may occur before or after the general exam. The design and content of the proposal, as well as the timing and style of its presentation, is determined in consultation with dissertation advisor. Before holding the proposal defense, the student must publicly advertise the event by emailing the DGES faculty and graduate student listservs at least a week beforehand. The student should inform the Director of Graduate Studies in writing when their dissertation proposal has been presented and approved by the Advisory Committee. Copy all committee members on this email.

9.6 General exam

The general examination is intended to test the student's mastery of a number of related fields as well as the student's capacity for synthesis, sound generalization, and critical ability. The first part of the general examination consists of written examinations. A satisfactory written examination will be followed by an oral examination in the presence of the entire committee.

See Section 8.5 of the GCB for an overview of regulations regarding the general exam. Our department recommends that PhD students take their general exam before the end of their fifth semester, after they have completed all essential coursework, *except* for dissertation hours (GEOG 6980). As indicated in Section 8.2.6 of the GCB, PhD students must successfully pass their General Exam within four calendar years from initial enrollment, although there is a process for requesting an extension (see Section 8.2.6.1 for details).

Please remember that the *Advisory Conference Report* form must be filed with the Graduate College no later than one semester before the general exam will be taken. The student must also apply for permission from the Graduate College to take the general exam by submitting the *General Exam Application for the Doctoral Degree*. When permission is granted, the Graduate College will send the student and advisor the *Authority Report Form for the General Examination*. This form must be completed and returned to the Graduate College within 72 hours of the completion of the exam. Please see Appendix B for a checklist of these forms and deadlines.

The contents of the general exam will be determined by the student's dissertation committee. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with their advisor and each committee member individually **several months before the general exam** to clarify the content and quantity of questions asked, expectations regarding written responses to questions and the verbal portion of the exam. Committee members may wish to see your dissertation proposal before discussing the content of the general exam. After meeting with all committee members, the student is **strongly encouraged** to email the entire committee a summary of the student's understanding of the expected format and content (e.g. any readings assigned by each committee member) for the general exam. This email serves as written documentation of the expected scope and content of the exam.

The written portion of the exam consists of a series of examination questions submitted by dissertation committee that are answered in accordance with the directions of the committee. These questions may be open- or closed-book and will have time limits as determined by the committee. The overall time required to complete the entire written portion of the exam typically ranges from a few days to a week.

The oral portion of the general exam is administered after the committee has evaluated the written portion of the general exam and decided that it meets expectations. During the oral portion of the exam, doctoral students sit with, and respond to questions, from the full committee. The questions may focus on or extend beyond the written portion of the exam. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of DGES, the specific topics covered in the oral examination will vary depending on the student's research emphasis. The amount of time required for the oral examination is usually at least two hours, and possibly longer depending on the material covered.

9.7 Submitting papers for publication

If a paper will be included in a student's dissertation, all members of the dissertation committee must be given the opportunity to review that paper before it is submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. Prior to submission, the student must send the final version of the paper to all committee members. Committee members should aim to assent to the submission or give the student constructive

feedback within two weeks. If more time is needed, the committee member and student should agree upon an alternative timeline. Reviewing a student's paper does not in itself warrant co-authorship on that paper for the committee member. At their first committee meeting, graduate students are encouraged to have a discussion with their committee about expectations for co-authorship.

9.8 Final steps: dissertation defense and completing your dissertation

Congratulations on being close to completing your PhD! Please be aware that there are a number of important deadlines and forms related to defending and completing your dissertation. **Failure to meet these deadlines will delay your graduation.** Please see Section 10 of this document, "Completing Your Thesis or Dissertation" for details.

10. COMPLETING YOUR THESIS OR DISSERTATION

This section explains in detail the process, deadlines and forms required for completing, defending and depositing your thesis or dissertation. For a summary of key deadlines and forms, please see Appendix A (for Master's theses) or Appendix B (for PhD dissertations). Always remember that the Graduate College's [Steps to Degree](#) provides the deadlines for upcoming semesters and should be considered the final word on University-level deadlines.

10.1 Scheduling your defense

Congratulations on being nearly done! As soon as you are confident of your anticipated completion timeline (e.g., you are confident that you will be able to defend by the deadline set for that semester), please work with your committee to schedule a time and place for your defense. Most thesis and dissertation defenses last at least two hours and begin with a short presentation. They must be attended by all committee members (electronically or otherwise, see Section 7.2.5.3 of the GCB) and must be open to the public. In order to graduate in a particular semester, please ensure that your defense will be held before the deadline indicated on the [Academic Calendar](#). Once the date of your defense has been finalized, please work with the DGES front office staff to reserve a room for the defense and post public announcements of the defense.

Defenses are not permitted during the final exam period nor when the University is not in session (e.g., over winter or spring break). Please also remember that most faculty are on 9-month appointments (i.e., August 15 to May 15) and are not obligated to be available for committee service during the summer months. Defenses are discouraged during summer (between May 15 and August 15) but may be held during that period at the discretion of the committee. Before assuming that you will be able to defend in the summer, please confirm that all committee members will be available. Do not assume that your committee will agree to a summer defense.

When scheduling your defense, remember that you will need to have all revisions completed to your committee members' satisfaction before depositing the final version of your thesis or dissertation in the approved University of Oklahoma repository. Typically, the deadline for depositing your thesis or dissertation is only one week after the final day on which the Graduate College permits you to hold your thesis or dissertation defense; thus, *if you hold your defense on or near the final day permitted by the Graduate College, you will have only one week to complete*

all revisions to your thesis or dissertation. Students are **strongly discouraged** from scheduling their defense on or near the final date permitted by the Graduate College, unless they are confident that the committee will request only minor revisions (e.g., the committee has already reviewed a nearly-complete draft or significant portions of the thesis or dissertation) and the student is confident that they will be able to complete all revisions within one week. If you are unable to complete revisions before the deposit deadline, the Graduate College will require you to enroll in (and pay tuition for) at least two credits of GEOG 5980/6980 for the following semester.

Once you and your advisor have determined that you will defend the thesis or dissertation by the end of the semester, you must request an official degree audit in Stellic (Masters) or complete the online *Request for Degree Check* form (Doctoral) and submit it to the Graduate College. For Masters students, the degree check is due at approximately the middle of the semester before you intend to defend (see the [Steps to Degree](#) for the official deadline date). You must be registered for your last semester (i.e. GEOG 5980) **before you complete the request**, or it will be denied. If you request the official degree audit and then have to delay your graduation, you will have to update the request, but it is better to request an official degree audit at the point you have completed the required coursework and expect to graduate in the next semester than to submit it too late and encounter an issue with the request. For PhD students, the *Request for Degree Check* form is due no later than the second week of the semester in which the student intends to defend the dissertation.

10.2 Sharing your thesis or dissertation with your committee and DGES

Before your defense, you must share a “reading copy” of your thesis or dissertation with your committee and with the DGES community. The reading copy is a draft thesis or dissertation that is nearly complete, such that only minor revisions will be required after the defense.

Please ask your committee members whether they would prefer to receive a PDF or paper version of your reading copy; after you have shared the reading copy with your thesis/dissertation committee, you must submit the *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* form to the Graduate College. **This form must be submitted at least 10 working days prior to the defense.**

Masters students: While the Graduate College **recommends** that the thesis draft be submitted to the committee at least 30 days prior to the defense, the thesis committee will determine how far in advance the student should provide the draft to all committee members. This time limit should allow the committee sufficient time to review the thesis and approve any revisions required before the deadline for submitting. At a minimum, DGES **requires** that the thesis draft be submitted to the committee at least 10 working days prior to the defense, however because this is also the deadline for the committee to sign the *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* form, it would be wise to give them 2 weeks or more to review the copy and sign the form.

PhD students: While the Graduate College **recommends** that the dissertation draft be submitted to the committee at least 30 days prior to the defense, the dissertation committee will determine how far in advance the student should provide the draft to all committee members. This time limit should allow the committee sufficient time to review the dissertation and approve any revisions

required before the deadline for submitting. At a minimum, DGES **requires** that the dissertation draft be submitted to the committee at least 10 working days prior to the defense. However, unless the committee has already read and approved a majority of the dissertation, they will require more than 10 days to read it. Furthermore, 10 working days is also the deadline for the committee to sign the *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* form, so it would be wise to give them 2 weeks or more to review the copy and sign the form.

All students: DGES requires that all students make the reading copy of their thesis or dissertation publicly available **at least 10 working days prior to the defense**.

To distribute to the DGES community, you must email a PDF version of your reading copy to the DGES faculty and graduate student listservs. You should have access to email the Graduate Student listserv, but either the front office staff or your advisor will have to help you distribute it to the faculty. This email should also give the time and place of your defense and provide a link to virtually attend (if applicable).

10.3 Holding the defense

Committee members must sign the *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* form (see 10.2) at least ten working days before the defense. If the request for authority is approved, the Graduate College will issue the *Authority Report Form for the Defense* to the student, the committee, and the graduate liaison via OU email. The student may not defend until this form has been issued. The result of an unauthorized defense will not, under any circumstances, be considered valid. The *Authority Report Form* is valid only for the period indicated on the form. If the defense is not held during this period, the graduate liaison or committee chair must notify the Graduate College in writing as to why the defense was not held and the form must be returned marked “Not Taken.” The defense must then be rescheduled for a future term, and the student must submit a new *Request for Degree Check* and *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* form.

10.4 Depositing your final thesis or dissertation

Congratulations on your successful defense! After a successful defense, you must complete any revisions required by the committee before submitting the final dissertation to the OU digital repository. Submission instructions will be provided by the Graduate College in the email authorizing the defense. The final thesis is due within 60 calendar days of the defense, but a student planning to graduate in a given semester may need to submit the final document sooner in order to meet the graduation deadline for that semester indicated on the [Academic Calendar](#). A student who does not submit the final thesis or dissertation during the semester of the defense must enroll in at least two hours of GEOG 5980 or 6980 during the semester in which the thesis or dissertation is submitted.

Before submitting the final thesis or dissertation to the OU digital repository, the student must submit the *Approval for Thesis/Dissertation Submission* form to the Graduate College. The committee members must sign this form to indicate the date by which the student completed all required revisions and is eligible to submit the final document to the OU digital repository. Once you submit the final document, continue to check your email. The Graduate College could require additional modifications to meet the [formatting standards](#) and usually gives you about a week to

complete those updates. If they are not completed as requested, you could be required to register for additional hours of GEOG 5980 or 6980 to complete the revisions.

11. APPENDIX A: TIMELINE FOR THE MASTERS PROGRAM

The timeline below applies to full-time Masters students aiming to complete the degree in two years. If you are not a full-time Masters student, please work with your advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies to determine an alternative timeline.

DGES deadlines are in purple. OU Graduate College deadlines are in red.

For specific calendar dates and links to web forms for Graduate College (GC) deadlines, see:

<https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms-and-policies/graduate-college-bulletin#7.1>

<https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms-and-policies/steps-to-degree#masters-deadlines>

Year 1

Semester 1

- ☐ Complete the *Advising Agreement* form before the end of your first semester
- ☐ Meet regularly with your advisor to discuss research and coursework plans
- ☐ Recommendation: take GEOG 6973 (if fall) or GEOG 6953 (if spring)
- ☐ Recommendation: take GEOG 5313 (if fall and MA student) or GIS 5923 (if fall and MS student)

Semester 2

- ☐ Meet regularly with your advisor to discuss research and coursework plans
- ☐ Thesis students: work with your advisor to select your thesis committee
- ☐ Recommendation: take GEOG 6973 (if fall) or GEOG 6953 (if spring)
- ☐ Recommendation: take GEOG 5313 (if fall and MA student) or GIS 5923 (if fall and MS student)

Year 2

Semester 1 (third semester in program)

- ☐ Meet regularly with your advisor to discuss research and coursework plans. Thesis students discuss when to begin enrollment in GEOG 5980. Once you begin enrolling in GEOG 5980, you must enroll in a minimum of two credit hours of GEOG 5980 each semester (not including summer).
- ☐ Thesis students: work with your advisor to prepare a thesis proposal before the fourth week of the semester. Share this document with your committee.
- ☐ Request an Official Degree Audit in Stellic (must be done before you submit the *Thesis Topic and Committee Membership* form)
- ☐ Thesis students: submit the *Thesis Topic and Committee Membership* form to the GC
- ☐ Apply for graduation with the Graduate College through one.ou.edu

Semester 2 (fourth semester in program)

- ☐ Meet regularly with your advisor to discuss research and coursework plans

- ☐ Thesis students: enroll in at least 2 credits of GEOG 5980, even if it is summer session, if you are planning to defend
- ☐ Thesis students: submit the *Request for Degree Check* form to the GC
- ☐ Thesis students: schedule your defense with your committee. When selecting the date, pay attention to GC deadlines at the link above.
- ☐ Thesis students: At least 10 working days before your defense, provide your committee with the reading copy of your thesis. Your committee may request your thesis earlier than this date.
- ☐ Thesis students: At least 10 working days prior to the defense, submit the *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* to the GC with all committee signatures
- ☐ Thesis students: At least 10 working days prior to the defense, email the reading copy of your thesis to the DGES faculty and graduate student listservs. This email should also announce the time and place of your defense.
- ☐ Thesis students: defend your thesis!
- ☐ Thesis students: after the thesis defense, the committee will report its decision on the *Authority Report Form for the Thesis Defense* by indicating a “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” result. You must return a completed copy of this form to the Graduate College within three working days of the dissertation defense.
- ☐ Thesis students: Make any needed thesis revisions and submit *Approval for Thesis Submission* form
- ☐ Thesis students: Submit your thesis to the OU digital repository
- ☐ Non-thesis students: discuss the format of your non-thesis exam with your advisor as early as possible. Remind your advisor that they must request authority from the GC to hold the non-thesis exam. Complete your exam and ensure that your advisor promptly reports the results to the GC.

Congratulations!

12. APPENDIX B: TIMELINE FOR THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

If you are not a full-time doctoral student, please work with your advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies to determine an alternative timeline for submitting Graduate College paperwork and a proposal to your dissertation committee.

DGES deadlines are in purple. OU Graduate College deadlines are in red. This timeline assumes that the proposal defense and general exam will be held in the fifth semester, which is common for DGES students. Deadlines related to the proposal defense and general exam are in orange. If you plan to hold your proposal defense and general exam in a different semester, please shift these deadlines accordingly.

For specific calendar dates and links to web forms for Graduate College (GC) deadlines, see:

<https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms-and-policies/graduate-college-bulletin#8.1>

<https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms-and-policies/forms#doctoral-forms>

Year 1

Semester 1

- ☐ Complete the *Advising Agreement* form before the end of your first semester
- ☐ Meet regularly with your advisor to discuss research and coursework
- ☐ Recommendation: take GEOG 6973 (if fall) or GEOG 6953 (if spring)

Semester 2

- ☐ Meet regularly with your advisor to discuss research and coursework
- ☐ Recommendation: take GEOG 6973 (if fall) or GEOG 6953 (if spring)

Year 2

Semester 1 (third semester in program)

- ☐ Meet regularly with your advisor to discuss research and coursework
- ☐ Work with your advisor to assemble your dissertation committee

Semester 2 (fourth semester in program)

- ☐ Meet regularly with your advisor to discuss research and coursework
- ☐ Meet with your committee to discuss your research plans and timeline for completing key milestones (general exam, proposal defense, research tasks and dissertation). For most students, this first committee meeting should serve as the *Advisory Conference* required by the GC.
- ☐ Complete the *Advisory Conference Report (ACR)* no later than one semester before the general exam will be held. (GC deadline)
- ☐ Recommendation: meet with each committee member individually to discuss their expectations for your general exam and dissertation proposal.

Year 3

Semester 1 (fifth semester in program)

- ☐ Meet regularly with your advisor to discuss research and coursework
- ☐ As early as possible, schedule the time and place for your general exam and proposal defense
- ☐ Submit the *General Exam Application for the Doctoral Degree* to the GC no later than the end of the second week of the semester in which the exam will be taken. (GC deadline)

- ☐ Publicly advertise your dissertation proposal presentation by email to the DGES faculty and graduate student listservs. (DGES deadline)
- ☐ Complete the written portion of your general exam.
- ☐ Publicly present your dissertation proposal. (Often, but not always, at the start of the oral portion of your general exam). (DGES deadline)
- ☐ Complete the oral portion of your general exam.
- ☐ Within three working days of the general exam, complete and return the *Authority Report Form for the General Examination* to the GC. (GC deadline)

Year 3 and beyond

- ☐ Meet regularly with your advisor to discuss research.
- ☐ Make sure your ACR stays up to date if committee members or coursework changes.
- ☐ If you have passed your general exam, enroll in at least two credits of GEOG 6980. Once you begin enrolling in GEOG 6980, you must enroll in a minimum of two credit hours of GEOG 6980 each semester (not including summer).
- ☐ Meet at least annually with your committee to discuss research progress and plans

Final year

- ☐ Apply for graduation at one.ou.edu one semester before you plan to graduate
- ☐ Make sure your ACR is up to date the semester before you intend to graduate. If in doubt, submit a new one.

Final semester

- ☐ Enroll in at least two credits of GEOG 6980, even if it is the summer session.
- ☐ No later than the second week of the semester, submit a *Request for Degree Check* to the GC
- ☐ As soon as you are confident that you will defend this semester, schedule the time and place for your dissertation defense
- ☐ Provide a complete draft of your dissertation to every member of your committee. The doctoral committee will determine how far in advance the student should provide the draft to all committee members. The Graduate College recommends (but does not require) that the dissertation draft be submitted to the committee at least 30 days prior to the defense. DGES requires that the dissertation draft be submitted to the committee at least 10 working days prior to the defense. However, unless the committee has already read and approved a majority of the dissertation, they will require more than 10 days to read it.
- ☐ At least 10 working days prior to the defense, submit the *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* to the GC with all committee signatures.
- ☐ At least 10 working days prior to the defense, email the reading copy of your dissertation to the DGES faculty and graduate student listservs. This email should also announce the time and place of your defense.
- ☐ Defend your dissertation!
- ☐ After the dissertation defense, the committee will report its decision on the *Authority Report Form for the Dissertation Defense* by indicating a “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” result. You must return a completed copy of this form to the Graduate College within three working days of the dissertation defense.
- ☐ Complete any revisions requested by the committee

- ☐ After your committee has approved your final dissertation, submit the *Approval for Thesis/Dissertation Submission* form to the Graduate College.
- ☐ Submit your dissertation to the OU digital repository, according to the instructions you received in the Graduate College email authorizing your defense.

Congratulations!

13: APPENDIX C: CHANGING VARIABLE CREDIT COURSE HOURS

Once you enroll in a course that has variable credit hours, the system will automatically enroll you in the minimum number of hours for that course.

REGISTER FOR CLASSES

Find Classes | Enter CRNs | My Plans | My Schedule and Options

Enter Your Search Criteria

Term: Fall 2014

Subject

Course Number

Keyword

[Advanced Search](#)

Schedule | Schedule Details | Summary

Class Schedule for Fall 2014

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1pm		☒ The Understanding of Art		☒ The Understanding of Art		☒ The Understanding of Art	
2pm			☒ The Understanding of Art				
3pm							
4pm							
5pm		☒ University Marching Band		☒ University Marching Band	☒ University Marching Band	☒ University Marching Band	

Summary

Title	Details	Hours	CRN	Schedule Type	Status	Action
The Understanding...	A HI 1113...	3	14214	Lecture	Registered	None
University Marching...	MUTE 113...	0	19332	Perfor...	Registered	None

Total Hours | Registered: 3.0 | Billing: 3.0 | CEU: 0.0 | Min: 0.0 | Max: 13.0

You can see the number of hours that you are currently enrolled in.

Click on “My Schedule and Options” to change the number of hours that you are enrolled in.

Banner Self-Service | Student | Registration | Select a Term | Register for Classes

REGISTER FOR CLASSES

Find Classes | Enter CRNs | My Plans | My Schedule and Options

Summary

Term: Fall 2014

Title	Hours	CRN	Grade Mode	Level	Study Path
The Understanding of Art	3	14214	Letter Graded	Undergraduate	None
University Marching Band	<u>0</u>	19332	Letter Graded	Undergraduate	None

Records: 2

Total Hours | Registered: 3.0 | Billing: 3.0 | CEU: 0.0 | Min: 0.0 | Max: 13.0

The course with variable credit hours is underlined.

Click on the credit hours and it will give you the credit hour range for the course in question.

Title	Hours	CRN	Grade Mode	Level	Study Path
The Understanding of Art	3	14214	Letter Graded	Undergraduate	None
University Marching Band	0 Must be from 0 to 1	19332	Letter Graded	Undergraduate	None

Records: 2

Change the credit hours to what you are wanting within the credit hour range. Then submit your change.

REGISTER FOR CLASSES

Find Classes | Enter CRNs | My Plans | **My Schedule and Options**

Summary

Term: Fall 2014

Title	Hours	CRN	Grade Mode	Level	Study Path
The Understanding of Art	3	14214	Letter Graded	Undergraduate	None
University Marching Band	1	19332	Letter Graded	Undergraduate	None

Records: 2

Total Hours | Registered: 3.0 | Billing: 3.0 | CEU: 0.0 | Min: 0.0 | Max: 13.0

Schedule | Schedule Details

Class Schedule for Fall 2014

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1pm		✓ The Understanding of Art		✓ The Understanding of Art		✓ The Understanding of Art	
2pm			✓ The Understanding of Art				
3pm							
4pm		✓ University Marching Band		✓ University Marching Band	✓ University Marching Band	✓ University Marching Band	
5pm							

Panels | **Submit**

Credit hour change will be reflected here.

Click on Submit.

Once you have submitted the change you will get a message that states, “Save Successful.”

Student I. Test | Sign Out | 1 Notifications

Banner Self-Service | Student | Registration | Select a Term | Register for Classes

✓ Save Successful

REGISTER FOR CLASSES

Find Classes | Enter CRNs | My Plans | **My Schedule and Options**

Summary

Term: Fall 2014

Title	Hours	CRN	Grade Mode	Level	Study Path
▶ The Understanding of Art	3	14214	Letter Graded	Undergraduate	None
▶ University Marching Band	1	16332	Letter Graded	Undergraduate	None

Records: 2

Total Hours | Registered: 4.0 | Billing: 4.0 | CEU: 0.0 | Min: 0.0 | Max: 13.0

Schedule | Schedule Details

Class Schedule for Fall 2014

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1pm		✓ The Understanding of Art		✓ The Understanding of Art		✓ The Understanding of Art	
2pm			✓ The Understanding of Art				
3pm							
4pm		✓ University Marching Band		✓ University Marching Band	✓ University Marching Band	✓ University Marching Band	
5pm							

Panels | Submit

14. Appendix D: Resources for reporting incidents of misconduct, bias, harassment, or assault



Resources for Discrimination, Harassment, Intimidation, and Violence on Campus



Emergency

To report an immediate threat or if you or someone else need emergency assistance - call 911.

OU Advocates

To report gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, or stalking,
Call: OU Advocates (405) 615-0013
(24 hours a day, seven days a week, confidential)

or go to:
<https://www.ou.edu/advocacyandeducation/ou-advocates>

EthicsPoint

To report discrimination or ethical misconduct
Call: (844) 428-6531, an anonymous reporting system through EthicsPoint or go to:
ou.ethicspoint.com

Sexual Misconduct Office

Also to report an incident of sexual violence or harassment, please contact the Sexual Misconduct Office at (405) 325-2215 (8 – 5 pm, M-F) or smo@ou.edu

For more resources: <https://www.ou.edu/ags/geography/students/support>

15. Appendix E: Important DGES Forms (Advising Contract, Annual Evaluation form)

These forms are found as word documents on the [DGES Grad Student Teams Channel](#)



Advising Agreement between Graduate Students and Faculty

Student name:

Date:

Faculty Advisor:

Graduate Student Commitment

I understand that responsibility for my graduate education and success lies with me, and I pledge to do the following and will...

1. Be committed to my graduate education and demonstrate this commitment through my efforts in the classroom and in research settings
2. Maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, curiosity, and ethical standards
3. Meet regularly with my advisor and develop a communication strategy for providing updates on the progress and results of my research and other scholarly activities
4. Establish expectations regarding my graduate program timeline, milestones and responsibilities for demonstrating progress towards the degree
5. Work with my advisor to define the scope of my research topic, or if you are a non-thesis Masters student, work with the Chair of my non-thesis exam committee
6. Work with my advisor or Chair of non-thesis exam committee to establish a thesis, non-thesis exam, or dissertation committee; and communicate with committee members regularly, remaining responsive to their advice and constructive criticism
7. Review and remain familiar with DGES graduate program guide (GPG), the OU Graduate College Bulletin, and other relevant documents in order to be knowledgeable about and comply with all requirements of the policies and deadlines distinguishing my graduate program, the Graduate College, and the University of Oklahoma -- including the Integrity Council -- in both letter and spirit
8. If working as a Graduate Assistant (TA or an RA), discuss expectations regarding my appointment, as well as policies on work hours, sick leave and vacation, with my supervisor and notify them and/or others (such as fellow research group members) in advance of any planned absences (or sickness as they occur)

9. Discuss policies on authorship and attendance at, as well as any available funding for, professional meetings with my advisor
10. Determine the principles for ownership of my own work and co-authorship, and work with my advisor to submit in a timely manner all relevant research output that is ready for publication
11. Discuss with my advisor before submitting material for publication with an OU affiliation. My advisor may want to review and/or get approval from my committee if work is to be included in my thesis/dissertation
12. Understand that if I have concerns about my relationship with my advisor, I should seek advice from the graduate liaison or another faculty member I trust as early as possible
13. Be a fully engaged citizen of DGES. This includes attending department events such as colloquia when possible and helping fellow graduate students when necessary, providing feedback on their writing and presentations, fully participating in lab or research group meetings, mentoring younger colleagues, and setting a high standard of behavior that others can emulate
14. Recognize that academic scholarship creates community. We work together to train younger colleagues, and we all learn as much from being a mentor as from receiving guidance. A key aspect of the intellectual maturation process is recognizing that my research success depends on that of others in diverse ways. Both now and in the long run, my success will depend not only on the quality of my individual work, but also the strength of my relationships with others.
15. Demonstrate appropriate professional behavior at conferences, workshops, in the field, and when visiting collaborators. Remember that I represent DGES and our university.
16. Contribute to good working relationships with our external collaborators. Never take their contribution to my success for granted, or it may disappear. Most of the collaborations from which my studies benefit represent substantial investments in relationship built by my advisor and collaborators; burned bridges can have long-lasting effects.
17. Educate myself on the challenges of pursuing success in graduate school (cf. the [Report of the AAG Task Force on Mental Health](#))
18. Take ownership of my academic success, health, and happiness. Educate myself about, and when relevant, draw upon support available to me through the OU Libraries, OU Writing Center, Goddard Health Center, Sarkeys Fitness Center, Graduate College and Graduate Student Life, and the Disability Resource Center.
19. Report to a source suitable to degree of severity (e.g., perhaps my advisor, the Graduate Liaison, and/or the [OU Behavior Intervention Team](#)) any concerns I have about my own and/or other students' or colleagues' safety, health or well-being

Faculty Advisor Commitment

I understand my responsibility for mentoring and supporting my advisee in their pursuit of a graduate degree, and I will advise and support them in their thesis/dissertation research. I pledge to do the following and will...

1. Be committed to mentoring the graduate student and to their education and training to prepare them as a future member of relevant scholarly and/or research communities
2. Be supportive and respectful; encourage critical thinking and creativity; aim to provide for every graduate student under my supervision an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, and free of harassment and discrimination
3. Help to plan and direct the research project of the graduate student, set reasonable and attainable goals, and establish a timeline for completion
4. Meet with the student on a regular basis and point them toward appropriate resources for conducting thesis/dissertation research, and remaining informed about Graduate College requirements and deadlines
5. Support the graduate student in selecting a suitable thesis/dissertation committee and encourage the student to keep committee members informed of their progress
6. Assist the graduate student in obtaining complementary skills needed to be a successful researcher (e.g. oral and written communication skills, grant writing, lab management, animal and human research policies, the ethical conduct of research, and scientific/scholarly professionalism)
7. Educate myself on the challenges students face while pursuing a graduate degree (cf. the [Report of the AAG Task Force on Mental Health](#)), as well as the support available to graduate students through the OU Libraries, OU Writing Center, Goddard Health Center, Sarkeys Fitness Center, Graduate College and Graduate Student Life, and the Disability Resource Center
8. Report to a source suitable to degree of severity (e.g., perhaps departmental Chairs, the Graduate Liaison, and/or the [OU Behavior Intervention Team](#)) any concerns I have about the graduate student's safety, health or well-being
9. Encourage the student to seek additional opportunities in career development training
10. Discuss authorship policies with the graduate student and acknowledge the graduate student's contributions to projects beyond their own, if and when relevant
11. Discuss policy issues with the student in regard to disclosure, patent rights and publishing research discoveries, if and when appropriate
12. Encourage the graduate student to attend professional meetings and make an effort to help them secure funding for such activities

13. Be accessible to give advice and feedback on career goals and provide honest letters of recommendation for the next phase of professional development

Graduate student name	Signature	Date
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Faculty advisor name	Signature	Date
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These guidelines are based, with permission, on the Advising Agreement Between Graduate Students and Faculty prepared by the Brown Graduate School, which in turn is based on the "Mentoring Compact" published by the Graduate Research, Education and Training (GREAT) group of the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC), on the IDP (Independent Development Plan) developed by the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), on material development by the National Postdoctoral Association, and on the Guide to Mentoring Graduate Students, published by the Rackham Graduate School at the University of Michigan that the Brown Graduate School adapted with permission.

DGES Graduate Student Annual Report

Reporting Period: Jan. 1, YEAR to Dec. 31, YEAR

Instructions for completion:

Step 1: Complete this report by **January 15** and email it to your advisor.

Step 2: Meet with your advisor to discuss your report. Please contact your advisor to schedule this meeting.

Step 3: Your advisor will complete the final page of the report, and both you and your advisor must sign the completed report. The signed report must be emailed to the DGES Director of Graduate Studies (dmdrake@ou.edu) by **February 1**. Timely submission of the report is required for DGES funding.

Questions? Please email the DGES Director of Graduate Studies (dmdrake@ou.edu) if you have questions about how to complete this form.

Name:

Degree program:

Advisor name:

Semester you entered the graduate program:

Anticipated date of graduation:

Brief description of your career goals for the next 5-10 years:

Committee members (if known):

By signing this form, I affirm that I have met with my full thesis or dissertation committee this academic year; or that I have scheduled my committee meeting for a specific date and time later this semester. Beginning in the second year of their program, all students must meet with their full committee annually. First-year students do not need to meet with their committee.

Date of committee meeting during the previous academic year:

What milestones have you completed?

Milestone	Date completed
Required courses completed (GEOG 6973, 6953, etc.)	
All coursework completed	
Formed Committee	
Met with committee to discuss non-thesis or general exam	
Thesis or dissertation proposal approved	
Official Degree Audit Requested in Stellic	
Advisory Conference Report filed with the Graduate College	
General exam completed	
All coursework completed (except thesis/dissertation hours)	

Number of credit hours earned toward degree:

Coursework completed during the last year:

Research activities during the reporting period: *Describe your research progress during the reporting period. Are there problems or unanticipated events affecting your research efforts? Did you meet the goals that you set during the last reporting period?*

Professional meetings attended:

Talks, seminars, or posters presented:

Publications in review:

Publications in press:

Publications (complete list, not just during the reporting period):

Awards or recognitions during the reporting period:

Grants or fellowships applied for or awarded during the reporting period:

Any other professional activities not covered above:

Research milestones to be achieved during the *next* reporting period. *Be specific with regard to data collection, analysis, manuscript submissions, and other areas relevant to your professional goals. These are targets for next year's report.*

Academic milestones to be achieved during the *next* reporting period. *Be specific with regard to progress towards your degree. These are the targets for next year's report.*

Are there aspects of your graduate training that you would like to see improved?

Faculty advisor's review

Based on the annual report above, as well as other information available to you, please comment on the student's progress towards their degree. Comment in particular on the student's accomplishments during the past year, but also any challenges or concerns and how they have been handled. Finally, comment on the goal and expectations for the following year as discussed with the student.

The student's progress toward the degree is (highlight one):

Satisfactory

Marginally satisfactory

Unsatisfactory

Advisor's signature and date:

Student's signature and date: