Department of Geography

Graduate Student Orientation Guide

Academic Year 2020-2021

NUS Geography website: www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/

https://www.facebook.com/groups/844149515642623/
Map of main NUS campus Geography departmental office and majority of labs and offices = Block AS2, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) = Block AS7. A larger map with University Town also shown is at: http://map.nus.edu.sg/index.php
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Welcome from the Department Graduate Studies Coordinator

Welcome to the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore (NUS)!

Before inviting you to read about the Department’s history and take the time to absorb the information in the remaining paragraphs I want to speak to you about the Pandemic situation and how that is affecting things. The Pandemic has probably affected almost every person on the planet either through the virus itself or the plethora of social, cultural, economic and political consequences. It is still with us and we have to work really hard to minimise its impacts as much as we can. To this end it is ESSENTIAL that you obey all national regulations and advisories and also those of NUS itself – and there are differences between them. Please work hard to navigate your way through what you can and can’t do, how you can best protect yourself and others, and keep up to date. I am sure that all of you have lived through a range of lock downs, circuit breakers, and other restrictions – but each country does things differently – so do familiarise yourselves as soon as possible to the Singapore/NUS ways of fighting the Pandemic.

As the Graduate Co-ordinator I have worked hard to support the graduate students affected by Covid-19 in conjunction with the members of the Department’s Graduate Studies Committee and the Faculty’s Graduate Studies Division. We have an evolving process for finding the best ways to support students (each year group has different issues to be attended to), but I have to be clear – this year things are inevitably different and there are problems that we all have to tackle. That said, we are an experienced department and we are fully committed to making sure your graduate experience is as positive and productive as possible. You will all need to work hard to fulfil your dreams – just as previous cohorts have done – and we will support you as much as possible to enable you to work effectively and successfully. Writing a thesis is known to demand hard work and long hours, the feeling you get when you have completed it...makes it all worthwhile.

Geography at NUS has a relatively long history, having been established in 1928 as one of three initial subjects offered in the then newly formed Faculty of Arts, Raffles College (which in 1949 became part of the University of Malaya, and then in 1962 the University of Singapore, before eventually settling on the name of National University of Singapore in 1980). The Department of Geography has grown substantially over the years and is today ranked among the top Geography departments in the world. As a top ranked department in a leading global university, Geography at NUS aims to offer a world-class graduate programme that enhances the experiences and professional development of graduate students and provides a solid foundation for future career development.

This Orientation Guide briefly outlines some information that newly registered graduate students in Geography at NUS are likely to find useful. It is an extremely important document and will be a useful source of essential details for the different stages of your graduate student career.

The Guide covers a broad range of information aimed at helping new students settle in and quickly find their feet. Much of the content focuses on research and teaching related matters. However, graduate life ought to be about more than just work, and especially so when you are fortunate enough to be located in one of the most culturally diverse and technologically advanced cities in the world, at the centre of an extremely dynamic and exciting region. Your years spent as a graduate student in Geography at NUS have the potential to be among the most rewarding of your life, during which you develop an international network of friends and research contacts, enjoy some memorable experiences and gain a firm grounding in this endlessly fascinating discipline we share. To help build and maintain potentially life-long friendships and a collegial working environment – as well as to improve your understandings of the discipline of Geography, the city of Singapore and its people – several events are planned over the course of the coming
Many of these events are mentioned in the following pages of this Guide: you are strongly encouraged to participate, and to become an active part of the graduate community and our Department more widely.

Additional information for new graduate students is provided in the Guide for Graduate Research Students produced annually by the Faculty for Arts and Social Sciences (FASS).

The web address: https://myportal.nus.edu.sg/studentportal/fas/gd/ also links to Faculty-level information on programme requirements, funding sources, fees, modules available, examination matters etc. International students, new to Singapore, are also advised to consult the NUS International Students website at http://nus.edu.sg/osa/

Everyone in Geography, both staff and students, looks forward to seeing you around the Department (when restrictions allow it), and to helping you achieve your ambitions. The Department is committed to creating a space of equality, inclusion and safety (online or face-to-face). We expect all faculty/staff and students to treat each other with dignity and respect. On a more personal note, I take this opportunity to welcome you and to wish you an extremely successful and enjoyable stay in Geography, NUS. I look forward to seeing you all develop individually and collectively, well-equipped to deal with life’s challenges and therefore able to make valuable contributions not only to your chosen area of research, but also to our discipline, and wider worlds.

Associate Professor Tracey Skelton
Graduate Coordinator/Graduate Advisor/ Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee
Department of Geography
Contact details

Once settled in the Department, your first point of contact should be your supervisor(s). **All Masters students have a nominated supervisor in the Department**; all PhD students have **at least two nominated supervisors**, at least one of whom must be based in the Department. You will be informed who your supervisor(s) are soon after your arrival in the Department, if you have not already been told. In addition to your supervisor(s), in the Department you will also quickly get to know Pauline Lee and Tim Bunnell and the Graduate Student representatives (GSRs). Pauline’s main responsibility is to provide administrative support to the Department’s graduate studies programme: Tim is the overall coordinator of the programme. The GSRs provide a link between staff and graduate students, and help maintain a vibrant community of researchers in Geography.

**Relevant contact details in the Department:**

Ms Pauline Lee
Administrator, Graduate studies. Email: geoleep1@nus.edu.sg

Associate Professor Tracey Skelton
Graduate Coordinator/Graduate Advisor. Email: geots@nus.edu.sg

Professor Lu Xixi
Deputy Graduate Coordinator/Graduate Advisor. Email: geoluxx@nus.edu.sg

**Graduate Student Representatives (Research Programme)**

Ms Melissa Low
Email: e0507944@u.nus.edu

Mr Jeasurk Yang
Email: e0508688@u.nus.edu

Ms Hanna Sundahl
Email: e0526400@u.nus.edu

**Graduate Student Representatives (Coursework Programme – MSc in Applied GIS)**

Mr Ang Xiang Jing
Email: e0575730@u.nus.edu

Ms Yan Cheng Cheng
Email: e0575457@u.nus.edu

Associate Professor Feng Chen-Chieh
Director, MSc in Applied GIS. Email: geofcc@nus.edu.sg

Ms Wong Lai Wa
Senior Manager. Email: geowlw@nus.edu.sg

Mr Ma Siyuan, Kevin
GIS Manager. Email: geoms@nus.edu.sg
And in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), NUS:

Associate Professor Bruce Lockhart
Vice-Dean (Graduate Studies). Email: fasbl@nus.edu.sg

Associate Professor Ganapathy Narayanan
Associate Dean (Graduate Studies). Email: fasgn@nus.edu.sg
New graduate student information

As a new graduate student in Geography, please make sure that you are fully aware of the information hosted on the Department’s Graduate webpages:
http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/graduate/overview.html

Also, the FASS webpage provides an extremely useful Graduate Student Portal to a wealth of information on graduate studies in the Faculty, including information on employment opportunities at:
https://myportal.nus.edu.sg/studentportal/fas/gd/

Information on Faculty-level research clusters is at:
https://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/research/researchclusters.html

Information on important events, organised by the FASS is at: https://myportal.nus.edu.sg/studentportal/fas/gd/ (under Announcements)

Graduate Student portal: https://myportal.nus.edu.sg/studentportal/fas/gd/

Forms for requests
Graduate Student portal: https://myportal.nus.edu.sg/studentportal/fas/gd/
→ Forms Repository for Research Students

Registrar’s Office: http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/downloadable-forms

The NUS Academic Calendar, detailing all the important dates in the university, including the public holidays, can be accessed via http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/calendar

The following information is likely to be of direct relevance to graduate students entering Geography, NUS.

Registration of Candidature

Tuesday, 28th July 2020 had been designated as the registration day for Graduate Research students in the Faculty, including Geography, who are due to commence their studies at the beginning of August (i.e. beginning of semester one of the AY 2020-2021). Registration of Candidature took place on that day in the U-Town Auditorium 1, Town Plaza on the U-Town campus. Those graduate students who are due to commence at the beginning of semester two (i.e. the second entry at the beginning of January 2021) will receive information on when and where to register closer to their date of registration.

Broaden your horizons as a graduate student in Geography at NUS: northern Uganda is one of the Department’s research sites!
**Departmental office**

The departmental (administration) office (Block AS2, level 2) is open from 8.30am to 6.00pm on Monday to Thursday, and 8.30am to 5.30 pm on Friday, excluding lunch time from 1–2pm and close on weekends and public holidays.

**Supervisors**

All Masters students have one supervisor in the Department, while all PhD students have at least two supervisors, at least one of whom is in the Department. Please arrange to meet with your supervisor(s) as soon as possible following your registration. New graduate students in Geography are required to complete a checklist in cooperation with their supervisor(s). A copy of the checklist is provided as Appendix 1 in this Guide (*FASS Checklist for Working Relationship between Supervisor and Research Student*). Please complete and submit to Pauline (geoleepl@nus.edu.sg) within one month of your candidature as a graduate student commencing (within one month of registering). You should also keep a personal copy of the checklist, and provide a copy (or copies) for your supervisor(s). Completion of the checklist is compulsory and is intended to ensure a satisfactory student-supervisor relationship; completing the checklist is therefore to your advantage.

Please note that a second (or third) supervisor need not be from the Department. Geography and FASS support in principle cross-departmental supervision (i.e. a supervisor team can comprise supervisors from different departments). However, you must first check with your main supervisor in Geography before approaching a potential additional supervisor from outside the Department. Also, please be aware that in all cases staff retain the prerogative to turn down requests from a student to act as one of their supervisors, and that the role of a supervisor is to advise you in research-related matters and to contribute to the evaluation of your progress. A
supervisor should not be regarded as your boss. Nor should they be viewed as the available at all-hours, font of all knowledge, including all there is to know about being a graduate student at NUS, or someone who is willing and able to write your thesis for you.

The Department has also recently produced supervision guidelines for graduate research students and faculty. A copy of these guidelines is included as Appendix 2. Please read through these guidelines, and feel free to raise any questions that you may have regarding the guidelines or with the supervision process with your supervisor(s). Guidelines for MSc students are in the process of being produced.

Generally graduate supervisors are experienced in research themselves, and are likely to have successfully supervised graduate research to completion in the past. If they are not experienced in graduate supervision (all experienced supervisors have to start somewhere), then the Department will endeavour to partner your supervisor with an additional supervisor who is.

PhD students will also have a Thesis Committee (TC). The TC comprises academics from the Department (and possibly also related disciplines) whose responsibility is to provide independent scrutiny and evaluation of a student’s progress as a doctoral researcher, including overseeing their Qualifying Examination (QE).

One last and very important point is that PhD students in FASS can opt to either submit a thesis as part of the examination requirements of follow the Articles-based pathway. Departments have been given some flexibility concerning the requirements of the Articles-based option. Those requirements adopted in Geography are detailed in Appendix 3. To summarise the requirements, an Articles-based submission in Geography must comprise at least three journal articles (at least two of which must at least be published, in press or accepted for publication) and an analytical commentary of 8000-12,000 words. The analytical commentary will form the main body of the thesis, with appendices comprising full copies of the journal articles. Students who may be interested in opting for the Articles-based pathway, as opposed to the standard thesis route, must first seek the advice and approval of their Thesis Committee before obtaining permission from the Graduate Coordinator in the Department.

**Governance**

Geography at NUS is managed through a system of committees that provide support to the Department Committee, chaired by the Head of Department (Professor Neil Coe). The Geography Management Team (GMT) meets in advance of the Department Committee to receive and review recommendations of the Undergraduate Studies, Graduate Studies, Research, and Student and External Relations committees. All these committees conduct meetings on a regular and frequent basis (generally at least twice a semester). Recommendations from the GMT are discussed and decided upon at Department Committee meetings.
One of our former Graduate Chairs, Professor David Taylor implemented the Geography Graduate Student Strategy (see Appendix 4) on behalf of the Department. Graduate students are represented directly on the GSC. There are currently three GSRs (Radhika, Chayanika, Yinn Shan) who were elected by the community of graduate students in Geography for the period of at least one year. Elections generally take place in January each year. For information on the roles and responsibilities of graduate student representatives, see Appendix 4 of this Guide.

Note from the roles and responsibilities document (Appendix 4) that “The overall role of the graduate student representatives in the Department is to maintain a vibrant, informed and well‐resourced community of graduate students in Geography at NUS”. The graduate student representatives also represent graduate students in Geography on the FASS Graduate Student Committee.

**Health & Health insurance**

The main clinic of the University Health Centre is on Lower Kent Ridge Road on the main campus: [http://map.nus.edu.sg/index.php](http://map.nus.edu.sg/index.php)  The Health Service website: [http://www.nus.edu.sg/uhc](http://www.nus.edu.sg/uhc) provides a wealth of up-to-date information on student health facilities at NUS, including consultation hours etc.

All full-time graduate students are required to subscribe to the NUS health services and insurance scheme, which covers students for hospitalization/surgical/mental health, personal accident and outpatient specialist care, and travel insurance. Information on the insurance policy and claim is available at: [http://www.nus.edu.sg/uhc/services/billing-insurance/insurance-matters](http://www.nus.edu.sg/uhc/services/billing-insurance/insurance-matters)

**For research scholars, the premium will automatically be deducted from the scholarship stipend on a semester-by-semester basis.**  Graduate students who are planning to carry out fieldwork, especially overseas fieldwork, should discuss with their supervisor(s) whether additional insurance is required/advisable.
The emergency number for students to call when they are overseas are: (65) 6836 2922 (24/7). Please remember to read up your policy and link and take note of your policy number and period as these are essential information that you have to provide in the event that you call for medical help when overseas.

![Singapore’s skyline](image)

**Risk assessment**
All graduate research students must complete a formal Risk Assessment procedure before embarking on fieldwork, irrespective of the location or the nature of the fieldwork. The same is also true for laboratory-based work. Students are strongly advised to seek advice from their supervisor(s) regarding the completion of the Risk Assessment in accordance with university regulations. You may also be required to obtain clearance from NUS’s Institutional Review Board (NUS-IRB) before embarking upon the data collection part of your research. Again you should discuss this matter with your supervisor. NUS-IRB’s webpage is at: [http://www.nus.edu.sg/irb/](http://www.nus.edu.sg/irb/)

**Computer accounts**
You will have an e-mail account at NUS that will be your official point of contact. All communications from the Department/FASS/NUS to students will be via the official email account. As such, you are expected to check your account frequently. You will be able to access your email account from using your NUSNET userid (e.g. eXXXXXX@u.nus.edu) and NUSNET password. This is different from your six-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN), which you will also need to access some systems. You will be given your NUSNET user id, password and PIN following registration.

Personal data files under the computer account of students who have graduated/withdrawn/terminated their candidature will be removed within the period given in the notice from NUS on the conferment/withdrawal/termination. A backup of the files should be made as soon as possible.

If you encounter any computer network problems, please contact NUS’s Computer Centre, via their hotline at 6516-2080 or email: [ccehelp@nus.edu.sg](mailto:ccehelp@nus.edu.sg)

**Desk space**
As a graduate student new to Geography and depending on your own needs, you are eligible for desk space in one of the shared graduate student offices in the Department. Your fellow graduate students through the Graduate Student representatives arrange the allocation of desk space and they will email you in this regard. As your desk will be in an office that you will share with other
graduate students in Geography, please avoid any unnecessary disturbances.

**Photocopying/printing services**
The Department does not provide photocopying services to graduate students. A network printer – dedicated to graduate research student use – is available in one of the graduate offices (AS2, #04-01). The Department covers the cost of the printer cartridges. However, students using the printer are expected to provide their own paper.

You may also consider using printers and associated services at:

*Student Cluster, AS7, #02-04*
Services: Photocopy, printing, and general PC usage
Operating hours: Semester period-Monday to Friday, 9am-9pm; Vacation period-Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. Closed on Saturday, Sunday and Public Holiday

*Multimedia Development Laboratory (MDL), AS7, #02-35/36*
Services: Scanning and other multimedia-related services
Operating hours: Monday to Friday, 9.00am-5:30pm. Closed on Saturday, Sunday and Public Holiday

**Use of Library Facilities**
The Department supports a range of map library resources (both paper and digital forms). Please contact Sakinah Yusof (email: geosy@nus.edu.sg) for more information. Operating hours follow those of the departmental office.

You can access the NUS-level library facilities during the following hours:
During Semester: Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 9pm. Saturday, 10am to 5pm.
Closed on Sunday and public holidays.

Opening hours are usually the same during recess week, but shorter during the vacation periods (December to January and May to August). The library is usually closed on public holidays but may be open on selected holidays (during the examination period). Please note that any revision of opening hours will be announced through the library’s excellent website: [https://libportal.nus.edu.sg/frontend/index](https://libportal.nus.edu.sg/frontend/index)

You are advised to consult the information on NUS libraries specifically designed for graduate students at: [http://tinyurl.com/lxrz5ru](http://tinyurl.com/lxrz5ru)

As a graduate student you may find yourself spending more time accessing and perusing digital holdings than on personal visits to the library. A listing of free (for NUS staff and students) to access digital resources is at: [http://libportal.nus.edu.sg/frontend/web/resources](http://libportal.nus.edu.sg/frontend/web/resources)

NUS students now enjoy direct access to the collections of books and journals within the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) and East Asia Institute (EAI) libraries. All you have to do is produce your student registration card at the ISEAS Library Counter for registration. Please contact ISEAS at 6870 2439 for further information. The EAI library is located on the Bukit Timah Campus, and holds Chinese and English language materials on China and East Asia. For enquiries and access, email Mr James Tan at eaitanj@nus.edu.sg.

**CO-OP Book stores in NUS**
NUS Co-Op (http://coop.nus.edu.sg/) may be able to assist you in ordering books relating to your studies. Tel: 6777 0325; Email: copfocs1@nus.edu.sg
Store Location: https://nuscoop.nus.edu.sg/about-nus-coop/store-locations/

- NUS Co-op@AS6
- NUS Co-op@LT27
- NUS Co-op@BTC
- The Museum Shop@LKCNHM

Booking of rooms in the Department
If you need to book any rooms in the Department, please drop an email to *either* Pauline (geoleepl@nus.edu.sg) or Mui Gek (geocmg@nus.edu.sg) to check on availability.

Business Cards
You may use the following vendor should you require business cards.

Goh Bros E-Print Pte Ltd
31 Lower Kent Ridge Road
Yusof Ishak House
Singapore 119078

Please follow the template for business cards for students at: http://www.nus.edu.sg/identity/guidelines/print/businesscard#

Should the vendor request for certification of your student status, please forward their email to Pauline at geoleepl@nus.edu.sg

Transport to/from and around campus
There are two MRT stations close to NUS campus: Clementi (connects to campus via the #96 and #201 bus service) and Kent Ridge (from where you can pick up #95 and NUS internal shuttle).

Bus #96 and #201 from NUS will take you to Clementi Central and the Clementi MRT station. Bus #95 from NUS will take you to Kent Ridge and Buona Vista MRT stations, and to Holland Village.

Internal shuttle bus services within NUS, University Town (U-Town) and Bukit Timah campuses are free. From U-Town the D1 travels to FASS (for Geography). You are advised to get off at the stop opposite Ventus; the D2 goes to Kent Ridge MRT station, and on to Prince Georges Park Residence. The A1 and A2 travel anticlockwise and clockwise around the main campus, respectively - but these buses do not go into U-Town. A useful app, ‘NusNextBus’, provides information on the approximate waiting time for any NUS bus from any bus stop.

All taxi drivers should know where the “NUS campus” is located. There are several points around the campus where taxis will pick-up.

Banks
You may open an account with DBS Bank on campus, located at the ground level of Yusof Ishak House. Alternatively, there are banks (POSB, United Overseas Bank, DBS, Overseas Chinese Bank Corporation) in Clementi Central.

Food outlets
There are many food outlets located on the NUS campus close to the Department¹.

¹ list of campus food outlets: https://uci.nus.edu.sg/oca/retail-dining/food-and-beverages/
Geography students and staff can often be found in discussions – some more animated than others – at the Humble Origins café on level 2, AS2. Two hawker centres near NUS provide reasonably priced local food: one along West Coast Road and one in Clementi Central. The row of food outlets on Clementi Road, just down from the Kent Ridge Bus Terminus, is also well worth a visit from time to time.

![Graduate students and staff collecting sediment cores off the coast of Singapore](image)

**Department information**

Geography at NUS is one of the most widely recognised and highly rated departments of Geography in the world. Currently there are more than 30 academic staff in the Department, along with several teaching and research fellows, ten members of support staff and approximately 60 graduate research (masters and PhD) and over 30 MSc students. For information on individual members of staff, please see:

- **Academic staff:** [http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/people/faculty.html](http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/people/faculty.html)
- **Support staff:** [http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/people/administrative-staff.html](http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/people/administrative-staff.html)

For information on current graduate research students, including brief summaries of their research areas, please see:

- **For PhD students:** [http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/graduate/phd-candidates.html](http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/graduate/phd-candidates.html)
- **For Masters students:** [http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/graduate/masters-candidates.html](http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/graduate/masters-candidates.html)

The Department launched the MSc Applied GIS since 2016-17. The MSc is a one year (full-time) intensive programme combining taught modules with a relatively short, research-based dissertation or project. The Department expects to host around 35 new students for 2020/2021, the fifth year of the programme.
Research groups in Geography
All academic staff and graduate students are assigned to one or more of the three core research groups in the Department. For information on research in Geography at NUS, please check out the different research groups (refer below). The main remit of the research groups is to promote the collaborative and individual research efforts of members of the group. Research students are expected to play a prominent role in the activities of research groups, including participating in seminars, workshops and reading group meetings linked to their group(s).

Please contact the research group chairs for information about their meetings and other group activities.

- **Politics, Economies, And Space** (PEAS) meets every Tuesday noon.

- **Social and Cultural Geographies** (SCG) meets every Wednesday noon.

- **Tropical Environmental Change** (TEC) meets every other Friday lunchtime

A faculty member from each of the three research groups set up the Research Seminar Committee and coordinate the departmental Research Seminar Series. The research seminars in Geography generally taking place on a Friday afternoon in the Earth Laboratory (AS2 #02-03/04), from 3.30pm until 5pm. Where a seminar is shared with a research centre/ institution the place and timing may differ. Often discussions that commence during the seminars are continued over food and drinks at one of the local cafes or bars until later in the evening in order to host the speaker. The seminar programme for AY 2019/20 is in process – 6 speakers have already been invited for semester 1. You will all receive notification of the seminars in advance and the details are posted on the department’s website. All graduate students in Geography are **strongly encouraged** to attend research seminars in the Department, particularly those seminars that are being hosted by the research group(s) to which you have been assigned, as an important part of your professional training.

Discussion groups
Informal discussion groups periodically meet to discuss issues relating to research in Geography that cut across the material normally covered in research group meetings. Examples are Nature and Society, Coastal development and management, and Singapore’s future. You will be contacted in advance about these meetings, and are welcome to attend them should you wish to. Also, as active graduate research students you should feel empowered to organise your own discussion group meetings on topics that you feel are likely to be of interest and that are unlikely to be covered in a meeting of a research group.

Facilities
The Department supports **Earth, Geo and GIS laboratories**, a **Map Library** and a **Weather Portal**. These facilities have been greatly improved in recent years, and will see further improvements in coming years. The Department is also well provided for in terms of **field equipment**, which supports fieldwork by Geography faculty and students in Singapore and internationally.

Please note that there are codes of conduct for the laboratories and for the use of field equipment that must be adhered to, in order to ensure the health and safety of all users and to avoid damaging expensive and difficult-to-replace/repair equipment. These codes include (but are not restricted to) the aforementioned Risk Assessment procedure. You should check with your
supervisor(s) and with the technical support staff concerned before using any research facilities in the Department.

Graduate students on fieldwork in mangrove  
as part of one of the field-based graduate modules

**Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography (SJTG)**
The department co-publishes the internationally peer-reviewed *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* with Blackwell Wiley. Graduates are welcome to contribute articles to the SJTG.

Graduate student-organised events and participation

Events and hang-outs

The Graduate Student Representatives (GSRs) organise social events on a regular basis and will keep you informed of forthcoming events by email. Apart from the emails, information of events will also be shared through the following channels:

1. **NUS Geography Graduate Students’ Facebook Page**\(^2\) It is not an open group, so please request to join it using your Facebook account, and one of the admins will approve your request.

2. **WhatsApp group “Fun Geo Grads!”**\(^3\) It is a platform for general communication, where the GSRs will periodically send useful campus life information and members can share events, announcements and ideas with each other.

Social events like hikes and BBQs will be organised throughout the year and you are highly encouraged to participate, or even co-host these events. All graduate students are also encouraged to suggest or plan events and activities at any time of the semester. These could include trips to local landmarks, dinners, games, ad hoc/informal discussions and etc. For example, GSRs organized a grad student outing to Sembawang Hot Springs Nature Park on 22nd of Jan, 2020.

The department social media

The department created social media in 2020 with a form of a Twitter account. The account is a joint initiative of GSC and SERC and has now been approved by Head of Department (HOD). The account is managed by two faculty members (currently Dr. Max Lupascu and Dr. Kenny-Lazar Miles) and coordinating GSRs (currently Jeasurk Yang and Hanna Sundahl).

The account is to publicize and promote research, events, and news of the department to a global audience, especially in geography and related disciplines. For graduate students, it is a great way to broaden the audience for your work and raise your profile. To that end, the department requests your help in sharing your latest updates so that the department can tweet them. When a student has a new paper published, her/his work has been featured in the media, has an important finding from a fieldwork, has received an award for the work, or given a public lecture, please kindly send such information to the coordinating GSRs (currently Jeasurk Yang and Hanna Sundahl) who will upload it to a Google Spreadsheet that the faculty member will then post to the Twitter account. Most importantly, include a draft tweet (limited to 280 characters), a relevant web link, and a relatively high resolution image. Please note that the department may choose not to tweet some content if it does not fit the type of content the department are seeking to promote.

If you are on Twitter, please follow the account, which is now active with the handle @NUSgeog. Please consider retweeting or liking the account’s tweets so that they can reach a wider audience through your networks. You could start off by liking and retweeting our first tweet, which introduces the account (pinned to the profile page). Also, feel free to recommend any accounts to follow.

\(^2\) https://www.facebook.com/groups/844149515642623/
\(^3\) Please add Hanna Sofia Slensvik Sundahl (+65 8789 4995), Melissa Low Yu Xing (+65 9090 8073) or Jeasurk Yang (+65 8551 8405)) first, and we will add you to the group!
Feedback and participation

Through these interactions and more, GSRs also gather students’ feedback and advocate for graduate students’ welfare. Please reach out to your GSRs, Graduate Program Coordinator and the department for questions and comments. Your feedback and ideas will help inform better policies and programmes for graduate students.

Usually, two to three GSRs serve for one calendar year. The current GSRs will send a recruitment email towards the end of the year. Interested students are highly encouraged to join the team. Should there be no objections, all the interested students will be chosen as GSRs without a ballot.

GSRs play a crucial role in raising concerns of the graduate community to the department and faculty at meetings, and maintaining the community morale and spirit through organizing activities. GSRs should ideally represent SCG, PEAS, and TEC research groups respectively. GSRs roles are eligible for 3 TA hours. Roles and responsibility of GSRs involve:

- Update notice boards (departmental and student-run)
- Maintain printer in the graduate room
- Run Whatsapp and Facebook groups
- Do desk allocation every semester
- Organise welcome parties at the start of each semester
- Attend department-level GSC meetings as representatives of the graduate student community
- Attend faculty-level meetings as representatives of the graduate student community
- Update the student community about salient points from GSC / faculty-level meetings
- Organise informal gatherings
- Needs assessment survey
- Maintain an online repository of useful information (e.g. about funding sources, etc)
1) **Friday Pub Outings** - following the regular Friday afternoon departmental seminars outings to local pubs/hawker centers are often organised, so that graduate students (and members of staff!) have a chance to discuss topics or socialise. NUS’s O Bar has become a popular venue for these informal discussions.

2) **Frequent campus meetings.** Many graduate students benefit from daily/weekly informal meals and office time together to discuss research, new books, or share tips on Teaching Assistant duties. New students are encouraged to plug into these informal networks around the Department, as current students will be ready and willing to help the new students adjust to and thrive in their new surroundings.

3) **The Geography Graduate Workshop** is an annual event that for AY 2019-2020 took place on 24th April 2020. The Workshop is entirely organised and hosted by graduate students in Geography and opened to anyone from within and outside NUS to attend. Details of the Geography Graduate Workshop 2020 can be found at: [http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/documents/graduate/190423_GRW-programme.pdf](http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/documents/graduate/190423_GRW-programme.pdf) and the past workshops can be found at: [http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/graduate/graduate-workshop.html](http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/graduate/graduate-workshop.html)

6) **NUS Geographical Society events.** The Geog Soc (pronounced “JEOG-SOCK”), as it is affectionately referred to, is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the needs, welfare and aspirations of all Geography students in NUS; in maintaining a strong and close relationship between the student community and faculty in the Department; and in promoting the discipline of Geography among the Singaporean student community. The
Geog Soc enjoys a long history and tradition of close ties with the Department, extending back to the days of the former University of Singapore. Today, the Geog Soc continues to serve as the umbrella body under which students studying and researching Geography can find both academic and social support. This is achieved through the numerous activities organised throughout the year. See: [http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/undergraduate/nus-geographical-society.html](http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/undergraduate/nus-geographical-society.html)

7) **Geosphere Magazine**, produced by the Geog Soc, provides an outlet for students to share research experiences, unique insights related to their work, and personal interests. Anyone interested in writing/layout/photography is welcomed to get involved. See: [http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/undergraduate/nus-geographical-society.html](http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/geog/undergraduate/nus-geographical-society.html) (Geosphere tab)

8) **FASS Research Clusters.** All of the Faculty’s Research Clusters have relevance to geographers. See [https://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/research/researchclusters.html](https://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/research/researchclusters.html) Some Geography graduate students are the coordinators of Cluster reading groups, which provide a great opportunity for the development of inter-department links and cross-pollination of ideas, and excellent fora for discussion and exploration.

9) **Participation in conferences and workshops off-campus.** PhD students in Geography are eligible to apply for travel grants to enable their participation in meetings taking place off-campus. Many students avail of these funds to allow their participation in international conferences overseas.

![Image](image.jpg)

Curricular requirements

As a new graduate student in Geography you will have to register for a number of level 5000 and 6000 (taught) modules. You may also be asked/expected to register for level 4000 modules (level 4000 modules are part of the Honours year undergraduate programme, but which have been made available to graduate students). You should check your original offer letter from NUS for information on how many modules you are required to take and at what level(s), and then discuss with your supervisor(s) which selection of the modules on offer, both in Geography and in other departments in FASS/NUS, is likely to best suit your needs before registering. However, please note that GE6770 Graduate Research Seminar module, a wide-ranging module aimed at skills development and awareness of the breadth of the discipline that in Geography takes place in Semester two of the AY, is compulsory for all students.
Information on curricular requirements and the selection of modules is provided from, respectively, page 6- and page 29- in the Guide for Graduate Research Students, produced by the FASS.

Note that online and manual registration for semester one modules takes place from 9.00am Thursday 23rd July 2020, 9am through to 5.30pm Friday 7th August 2020, 12 noon.

You will be able to manually (i.e. not online) add and drop modules once you are aware of your allocation. Further registration details will be sent by Pauline in due course.

You will be informed of the equivalent periods for the process of registering for semester two modules once the relevant dates have been made known to Geography.

Masters students have to take a minimum of four modules, including the Graduate Research Seminar (check your original offer letter from NUS for exact details). Note that the graduation requirement for Masters students comprises a pass mark in the thesis (maximum 30,000 words) and a CAP score of at least 3.0.

PhD students have to take a minimum of six modules, including the Graduate Research Seminar (check your original offer letter from NUS for exact details). Note that the graduation requirement for PhD students comprises a pass mark in the thesis (maximum 80,000 words) or Article-based submission (Appendix 2) and a CAP score of at least 3.5 and a maximum of two failed marks for modules. PhD students also have to pass an oral examination relating to their thesis or Article-based submission, and the PhD Qualifying Exam (QE) (Appendix 5). PhD students in Geography will take their QE during their second year of registration. Failure to pass the QE will result in a student’s registration being terminated, generally before or at the end of their second year. Students should start planning the QE by end of their first year.

Please note that, where applicable, the graduation requirement for masters and PhD students includes achieving a pass grade (C+) in an English language module.

Although students are allowed to fail modules, they are also expected to repeat (for core modules such as the GRS module) or replace (for electives) those failed modules in order to graduate. With effect from 2015/16, students are only allowed to repeat up to three modules, and can only repeat a failed module once. For further information, you are strongly advised to speak with your supervisor.
Masters students can seek an upgrade to PhD subject to recommendation by the Department and approval of the FASS. Students wishing to upgrade must have completed the following coursework requirement before proceeding to the QE:

- Passed at last five modules
- Obtained a CAP of at least 3.5
- Passed an English language course (intermediate level) with at least a C grade, if applicable.

Masters students thinking of seeking an upgrade are advised to see their supervisor(s) as soon as possible and must keep in mind that, if successful, their candidature as a PhD student will be back-dated to when they commenced their studies on the Masters register and rather than commencing on the date that the transfer was implemented. They should also note the following:

1) Requests for a Research Scholarship (RS) to fund a PhD post upgrade from a Masters student will only be considered under exceptional cases, and only then in relation to all other PhD applicants in the same round. If the request is successful, the RS will only be granted on a conditional basis, and subject to a student passing the QE or its equivalent.

2) Current Masters by Research students who wish to upgrade to a PhD and to continue their studies in the Department are strongly encouraged to complete the Masters thesis before reapplying to join the Department as a PhD student.
Lake Mohicap – a volcanic crater lake on the island of Luzon, Philippines. Research in the Department takes place in many parts of Southeast Asia, and more broadly in Asia and in the tropics.

Teaching opportunities for graduate students

Depending on the source of a graduate student’s funding, teaching could be one of a range of opportunities available to graduate research students that, if realised, not only provide a valuable break from research but also help broaden awareness and expertise and contribute to the building of a strong CV.

Research Scholarship (RS) students and Graduate Teaching Fellows (GTFs) are both required to do some teaching in the Department, as part of their scholarship/funding agreement. Please refer to your offer letter for more details.

The GSC has put together a set of teaching guidelines for graduate students in Geography. A copy of these guidelines is provided in Appendix 7 of this Guide. The Department also runs an annual Teaching Workshop for graduate research students. The workshop aims to share experiences relating to the provision of teaching support by graduate research students, from the perspectives of fellow graduate research students and from academic staff. You are strongly advised to attend this workshop, which this year is scheduled for Friday 17th August in the Honours Room, Department of Geography.

Funding and fees

There are numerous potential sources of funding for graduate students in Geography. Some of the sources may be well established and stable from one year to the next. These sources are therefore relatively predictable, and include support from FASS to participate in conferences etc. In other cases, financial support may be available through a research project that your supervisor(s) is(are) involved in, or perhaps an organisation that you have contacted yourself.
Support for Overseas or Local Fieldwork
Graduate students in Geography are eligible to apply for support for fieldwork (airfare, subsistence and other research-related expenses):
- PhD students – S$6000 (overseas), S$3000 (local)
- Masters students - S$3000 (overseas), S$1500 (local)

[Link to the application for Graduate Research Support Scheme (GRSS) FY2020]

Travel Grant for Conference (only for PhD students)
Travel grants are available for PhD students to present the results of your research at conferences:
[Link to the application for Graduate Student Conference funding (GSCC) FY2020 Jul 2020]

PhD top-up (upon passing the PhD Qualifying Examination)
PhD students are eligible for a top-up of S$500 per month (for a total of 24 months and up to the end of month 48 of a PhD candidature, whichever is earlier). The PhD top-up will not be disbursed during an extension of the Research Scholarship.

Super-trees, Singapore

Students who are interested in basing themselves at a university overseas for part of their research may be able to apply for additional financial support from the Graduate SEP (GSEP).
For further information, see: http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/intl.html/grad-students.html
Enquiries should be emailed to: studyabroadfass@nus.edu.sg

Regarding graduate fees, please note that students who are awarded a NUS Scholarship/Tuition Fee Assistance need not pay the tuition fee. For scholars, Copyright Fee, Student Activity & Services Fees and Academic Related Fees will be deducted from the scholarship stipend. Such fees are either deducted on a semester-by-semester basis, in July and December for, respectively, Semester I and Semester II, or on academic year basis. The Registration Fee, which is payable once only – at registration, is also deducted from the scholarship stipend.

Full fees are to be paid to the Office of Financial Services by the stipulated deadline, otherwise a late fee will be imposed. Students who had paid a full semester fees will receive a partial refund provided their thesis is submitted for examination to the Student Service Centre by the last Friday of September (in semester 1) or last Friday of March (in semester 2). For details of the stipulated timeline for fees payment, please refer to this link: http://www.nus.edu.sg/finance/NoticeonPaymentofFees.html

In addition, one semester’s tuition fees are payable if the revision period of the thesis after examination exceeds six months (cumulative). Tuition fees are payable until satisfactory completion of the thesis.

Self-financed Graduate students can obtain the updated annual tuition fee imposed for their cohort at: http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/docs/info/administrative-policies-procedures/gdtuitioncurrent.pdf
Seek help early!

If you are experiencing problems settling-in to or coping with graduate research student life, there is a good chance that you are not alone because transitioning to a graduate existence, which is likely to be less-structured than your undergraduate experiences and occurring in unfamiliar circumstances, can be a stressful process. If you are having problems, please seek help early: and please be assured that your situation will be treated with the upmost confidentiality.

As a first step in obtaining help, please consider consulting either with your fellow graduate students (e.g. one of the graduate student representatives) or with your supervisor(s). If this is not possible, please contact either:

Pauline Lee (Geography Administrator, Graduate studies)
Email: geoleepl@nus.edu.sg

Professor Tracey Skelton (Graduate Coordinator/Graduate Advisor)
Email: geost@nus.edu.sg

Professor Lu Xixi
Deputy Graduate Coordinator/Graduate Advisor. Email: geoluxx@nus.edu.sg

If you feel that whatever is concerning you is better handled outside the Department, then please contact either (or both) the Division of Graduate Studies in FASS:

http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/graduate/

Graduate Studies Division
Dean’s Office, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)
National University of Singapore
The Shaw Foundation Building
AS7, Level 6, 5 Arts Link
Singapore 117570

Tel: 6516-6164 / 8036
Fax: 6773-6878

Or University Counselling Services (UCS), part of the University Health Centre:
http://www.nus.edu.sg/uhc/mental-health/student/services

Email them at uhc_counselling@nus.edu.sg
Or make an appointment Tel: 6516-2376
Lifeline NUS Tel: 6516-7777 (24 hours hotline for psychological emergencies only)
Appendices

*Appendix 1*: FASS Checklist for Working Relationship between Supervisor and Research Student

*Appendix 2*: Graduate Research Student Supervision Guidelines for students and faculty

*Appendix 3*: Regulations concerning the Article-based PhD Thesis pathway in Geography

*Appendix 4*: NUS Geography Graduate Student Strategy

*Appendix 5*: Graduate student representatives in the Department of Geography, NUS: role and responsibilities

*Appendix 6*: Information on the PhD Qualifying Exam

*Appendix 7*: Teaching Guidelines for Graduate Students in the Department of Geography
Appendix 1: FASS Checklist for Working Relationship between Supervisor and Research Student

This Checklist is to facilitate a clear written document on the respective roles, duties and obligations of supervisors and research students, so as to avoid misunderstanding or a mismatch of expectations between the parties concerned. The document is to be worked out and agreed to by the supervisor/joint supervisors and the student from the inception of the supervisory relationship. The initial meeting between the student and the supervisor(s) should be arranged as soon as possible upon the assignment of the student to the supervisor.

The original written document duly signed between the supervisor/joint supervisors and student has to be deposited with the relevant departmental administrator, with the supervisor(s) and student each given a copy. It is the responsibility of the supervisor, or primary supervisor in the case of joint supervision, to arrange for the original and copies of the document to be given to the respective parties.

1. **Appointment of Supervisor(s)**

   **Broad Outline of Research Topic**

   Student: I am agreeable to the appointment of ____________ as supervisor for the topic listed above and understand that any request for change of supervisor must be addressed through the department graduate coordinator(s) to the Head of Department, and must be accompanied by explanatory reasons.

   Supervisor: I agree to supervise ________________ as a candidate for the degree of ____________ on the topic listed above and understand that any request for change of supervisor must be addressed through the department graduate coordinator(s) to the Head of Department, and must be accompanied by explanatory reasons.
It is the responsibility of the department to allocate supervision responsibilities. Where appropriate and feasible, the allocation process should be guided by the principle of freedom of choice, and of willing participants to the supervisor-student relationship.

Supervisors are appointed by the Head of Department, on advice from department graduate coordinator(s), taking into account factors such as research expertise, willingness to supervise, and work-load considerations.

2. Supervision Contact Session

We agree to meet for a minimum of _______ sessions over each semester until the submission of the thesis.

Departments may wish to specify the minimum number of hours that full-time/part-time students are normally expected to meet with their supervisors every week during the term, until the submission deadline.

These expectations indicate the overall amounts of guidance and interaction that supervisors should expect to offer and that students should expect to receive in the course of the thesis research.

Students are advised to work out the details of supervision arrangements with their supervisor(s). In the interests of mutual courtesy and respect, students should keep in mind that members of staff supervise several students concurrently, in addition to their teaching, research, and administrative commitments.

3. Duties and Responsibilities in the Writing of Theses

Student: I agree that it is my responsibility to write the thesis, maintain regular contact with the supervisor(s) and ensure that my research work keeps to the agreed schedule of work.

Supervisor: I agree that it is my responsibility to offer adequate supervision and guidance in the research topic and to provide timely feedback on any written work submitted by the candidate at each point of the agreed schedule.
Example of an Agreed Schedule of Work (to be tailored according to specific discipline’s requirements)

<table>
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<th>S/N.</th>
<th>Work to be done</th>
<th>Tentative dates of completion of work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Review of Literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Data collection/ Field work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Analysis of results/Writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Completed first draft</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Submission of final draft</td>
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Students are advised to prepare a realistic time-line in consultation with her/him, and ensure that research work keeps to the schedule agreed upon between supervisor and student. Students are expected to work on a regular basis, and should not expect the supervisor(s) to accommodate last minute reading of drafts or discussions. Supervisors will provide academic guidance; warn about weaknesses in design, shaky arguments, poor organization and expression, and so on. However, it is not the responsibility of the supervisor to do extensive or elaborate correction, keep track of deadlines, or ensure timely work on the student’s part. Ensuring these is the responsibility of the student.

4. Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Student: I have read the Faculty guidelines and warning on plagiarism and agree that it is unethical to submit a thesis which contains plagiarized materials. The thesis is expected to reflect my true competence in every way and that the duties of the supervisor do not extend to the rewriting (for style, language or otherwise) of my thesis. (Where applicable) I have also read the department’s ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects.

Supervisor: I confirm that the student has been given a copy and has read the Faculty guidelines and warning on plagiarism and undertake to inform and explain to the student on what constitutes plagiarism. (Where applicable) I have also given the student a copy of the department’s ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects.

Integrity in research is expected of each graduate student. The Supervisor should ensure that each graduate student is given a copy of the guidelines and warning on academic plagiarism. It
is the duty of students to carefully read the guidelines on plagiarism. Supervisors are expected to apprise their students of what the Department regards as academic plagiarism, and how to avoid it.

5. Work Obligations and Part-time Employment of Research Students

Student: I agree to abide by current Faculty procedures and guidelines concerning work obligations and part-time employment.

Supervisor: I have read and confirm that the student has been given a copy of the Faculty procedures and guidelines concerning work obligations and part-time employment.

Departments should make known to students and supervisors, the Faculty’s policy and guidelines on work obligations and part-time employment by research scholars and other graduate students.

6. Research Publication Credit and Order of Attribution

Supervisor & Student: We agree that the rule of proportionality should be applied in determining the order of authorship credit in joint publications so that the party responsible for undertaking the greater part of the work should be listed first.

In general credit for joint authorship between supervisor and student should follow ordinary notions of fairness, and should always reflect the relative weight of the contribution of the authors. Supervisors should not be entitled to claim first authorship merely by virtue of their having pioneered a particular field of research.

7. Resolution of Conflicts

Supervisor & Student: We are aware of the avenues opened for resolution of conflicts in the department and will undertake to follow the procedures laid down.

Departments must have clear written guidelines on the proper procedure to follow in the event of a dispute. Full information should be provided to students as to where they may seek advice,
help or counseling. In general, any difficulties encountered by students in getting adequate supervision should be referred in the first instance, to the department graduate coordinator(s), and then to the Head of Department. Any warnings, anxieties, or problems concerning research work that a supervisor may have about specific aspects of a student’s research work, or issues of academic integrity, should be also made known as early as possible to the graduate coordinator. It is expected that any problem encountered in the supervisor-student relation will be addressed by all parties concerned in a mature, temperate and civilized manner.

<table>
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<th>Signature and Date</th>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name of Student</th>
<th>Signature and Date</th>
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Graduate Studies Committee, Department of Geography, NUS

25 September 2016

Preamble
The supervision of graduate research students is part of the Department of Geography’s core mandate. Research carried out by graduate students, either for their M. Soc. Science or for their PhD, forms a vital part of the Department’s research effort. Furthermore, active research students can make a major contribution to the day-to-day activities of a Department, for example by participating in research group meetings and departmental seminars, and through their support for undergraduate teaching.

Good supervisory practice assists students to fulfil their potential as researchers, and enables their active participation in a wide range of departmental activities. Often the terms of a supervisory relationship are largely left to the discretion of individual graduate research students and their supervisor(s). While this approach is generally satisfactory – and is likely to have been the experience of many faculty when they were graduate research students – there are occasions when it is not. A lack of clarity between student and their supervisor(s) regarding responsibilities and expectations can negatively impact progress towards the completion of a research degree.

The range of research carried out by graduate research students in the Department of Geography is broad, covering the humanities and the social, environmental and life sciences. As a result, an equally broad range of practices is represented, including variations in styles and manners of supervision. Regardless of the model of supervision, there are general guidelines, policies and suggestions that comprise what could be regarded as good supervisory practice.

This document aims to provide a summary of those general guidelines, policies and suggestions that together could be viewed as comprising good supervisory practice. The intention is for the document to contribute to a successful student-supervisor(s) relationship and facilitate the creative process of research and thesis\(^1\) preparation and submission. The general guidelines have been composed from a range of sources, including documents on good supervisory practice that have been made publicly available by highly regarded universities in North America (notably the University of British Columbia, University of Toronto, Victoria University and the University of Pennsylvania). In addition to documents produced by individual universities, the content of this document is also based on information from the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, through its “Guiding Principles for Graduate Student Supervision”, published in 2008, and from the Graduate Supervision webpages of the University of Western Ontario, Canada.
The content of this document is intended to complement rather than replace other documents, checklists etc. relating to graduate supervision that are available to graduate research students in the Department.

1 Unless otherwise stated, the term thesis as used in this document does not differentiate between the standard thesis for PhD and M. Soc Science degrees or the optional "Articles-based PhD thesis".
Selection of supervisors

All M. Soc. Science students have one supervisor in the Department of Geography, while all PhD students have at least two supervisors, at least one of whom is in the Department. On entering the Department, graduate research students are assigned to a supervisor (the main supervisor). This process is determined by the student’s research interests, and by the willingness or availability of the faculty member concerned to act as a supervisor. The main supervisor will be a member of faculty in the Department, or will have a formal link to the Department (e.g. as a Courtesy Joint Appointment). PhD students must, through discussion with their assigned supervisor, choose at least one other supervisor (a co-supervisor) and the third member of their Thesis Committee (TC – see below), who may also be a co-supervisor. There may be instances where a student and their supervisor(s) decide that there are more appropriate supervisors in the Department (e.g. a student’s research interests may change during their first year of graduate research). In such a case, and with the permission of their originally assigned main supervisor, the student should meet with the Graduate Coordinator at their earliest opportunity to arrange for new supervisor(s).

Newly registered graduate research students should arrange to meet with their supervisor(s) as soon as possible. New research graduate students in Geography are required to complete a checklist in cooperation with their supervisor(s). A copy of the checklist is provided as Appendix 1 in the Orientation Guide (FASS Checklist for Working Relationship between Supervisor and Research Student). This form should be completed and submitted to the Graduate Administrator (Pauline, geoleepl@nus.edu.sg) within one month of a graduate research student registering. Students should also keep a personal copy of the checklist, and provide a copy (or copies) to their supervisor(s). Completion of the checklist and submission to the Graduate Administrator within one month of registration is compulsory and is the responsibility of the graduate student concerned.

Please note that the Department of Geography and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) support in principle cross-departmental supervision (in other words, a co-supervisor need not be in the Department of Geography). Moreover, in the case of PhD students, a co-supervisor may come from a Department or research institute at NUS that is outside FASS. Students must first check with their main supervisor in Geography before approaching a potential co-supervisor. Also, members of faculty are under no obligation to accept a request from a student to act as one of their supervisors. Furthermore, the role of a supervisor is to act as an advisor in research-related matters and to contribute to the evaluation of a student’s progress; they are not to be viewed as an employer.

PhD students will also have a T.C. The T.C. comprises academics from the Department (and possibly also related disciplines either within or outside of FASS) whose responsibility is to provide independent scrutiny and evaluation of a student’s progress as a doctoral researcher, including overseeing their Qualifying Examination (QE). Most TCs comprise three members of faculty, at least two of whom (the main supervisor and a co-supervisor) are involved directly in supervision.
When selecting a co-supervisor, students should feel free to ask about a potential supervisor’s:
  • willingness to supervise;
  • research interests;
  • previous supervisory experience, including the proportion of students who they have supervised who have successfully completed their research degrees without the need for an extension; and
  • current supervisory load (number of graduate research students currently being supervised).

The main supervisor and co-supervision
Co-supervision is widely seen as beneficial to a PhD student’s progression, as it enables a broadening of discussion and comment on work and ideas, as well as ensuring a more stable supervisory environment than might otherwise be the case. Moreover, assimilating and responding to different opinions are key research skills that students need in order to successfully navigate their QE, PhD examination and the process through which journal articles are accepted for publication. The role of the main supervisor is to act as the contact point between a student and the Department/FASS/NUS. Main supervisors also play a major role in supervision, although the level of engagement is likely to vary according to needs and the stage of progression of a student. A co-supervisor, or co-supervisors, may also play a major role in supervising the student. The level of engagement in supervision of a co-supervisor will also vary during a PhD student’s registration and, when compared with the level of supervision provided by the main supervisor, could range from relatively minor to equal to.

Clarifying expectations
Successfully navigating a typical graduate research degree requires a combination of skills on the part of both the student and their supervisor(s). Problems can and do arise, however, and commonly because of differences in expectation.

A bare minimum of the student-supervisor(s) relationship is that students should expect, and supervisors should provide, enough time at the beginning of the supervisory relationship to discuss and clarify not only the expectations of both student and their supervisor(s), but also the reasons behind those expectations, and whether any flexibility exists in the expectations. This is the basis for the aforementioned checklist (Appendix 1 in the Orientation Guide). The checklist does not cover everything, of course. Meetings held at the beginning of a graduate research student’s time in the Department might cover the following questions and topics (students and their supervisors may also find the checklists in Appendix 1 of this document useful as an informal guide or prompt concerning what might be covered):

  • Frequency and modes of contact. Are regular meetings required? How often? Who schedules them? Is the student expected to bring a written report, or present orally? Are regular meetings one-on-one or group meetings with other students?
What about informal meetings—is there an “open door” approach or does the student need to book an appointment?

- Should a written record be kept of meetings and agreed by all parties? If so, who makes the record and who receives copies? In general, keeping an agreed record of all meetings is highly recommended. Students may wish to use the example record sheet (Appendix 2 of this document) as a basis for recording meetings with their supervisor(s).
- How should non-scheduled communication be handled (e.g., setting up appointments, notification of temporary absence, lateness for meeting, etc.)? Landline, cell phone, email, dropping by the office, or other means? Does it matter? How soon should responses to email, for example, be expected?
- Where and when is most of the work to be carried out? What are expectations for normal working hours? Weekends, holidays?
- What programme of taught modules is likely to be most useful to and most manageable for the student?
- What are timing expectations in terms of major milestones – draft proposal, paper/chapter submission, conference presentations, drafts of thesis etc.? Good practice is to plan a timeline for the total program at the beginning and then revise periodically.
- How will the thesis topic be decided upon, and when?
- Which of the two optional pathways for a PhD thesis (the standard thesis or the Articles-based PhD thesis) offered in the Department is preferred, and when and how should this choice be formalised? (Note that a student wishing to opt for the Articles-based PhD thesis pathway must have the support of their TC in order to do so).
- How is feedback on progress provided?
- What is the expected turnaround time on drafts of written material such as thesis chapters, papers, conference presentations, grant proposals, etc.? Two to three weeks is a reasonable upper limit under normal circumstances. If there will be abnormal delays, how will this be conveyed to the student? What alternatives are there if the delay is unreasonably long?
- If part of the research is to be carried out in a laboratory, what is the lab etiquette (e.g. lab working hours, rules about clothing and footwear etc.)? What about necessary preparatory training, and how and when will this be done?
- What are expectations concerning publications and conference presentations during the thesis work? Experience in presenting scholarly work is an important part of graduate training. How will conference expenses be met?
- What are the expectations concerning other forms of work, including paid research work not related directly to a student’s graduate research?
- What opportunities will there be to meet others in the field and begin to build academic networks? How will the supervisor assist in this, and how much is up to the student? The socialising of students academically through participation in conferences, research seminars, meeting influential figures in their field etc. is important, especially if a student is hoping for a career in academia.
- How and when will the TC be formed, who should be on it and when and how often will it meet?
• When will the QE take place? Who is responsible for what in the QE?
• What kinds of discussions and decisions can take place between student and supervisor(s) about the examination of the thesis?
• What are the health and safety and ethical considerations of the proposed research? Is a Risk Assessment likely to be necessary? Is approval from NUS Institutional Review Board (IRB) likely to be needed? If so, how are Risk Assessments carried out/how is approval from the IRB sought and obtained? When should the process of assessing risk and/or obtaining IRB approval commence?

Responsibilities
Good supervisory practice involves responsibilities for both the student and their supervisor(s). Primary responsibility for keeping in touch with a supervisor rests with the student. That said, it is the responsibility of the supervisor(s) to be reasonably available for supervisory meetings. Moreover, the primary task of supervisor(s) is to guide and inspire their students to reach their scholarly potential. At the same time, each supervisor must try to ensure that they themselves as well as each student behave in compliance with the rules and regulations of the university.

A supervisor should promote conditions conducive to a student’s research and intellectual growth and provide appropriate guidance on the progress of the research and the standards expected. Other **responsibilities of a supervisor** include:

• Being familiar with and keeping to the rules, policies and procedures relating to graduate research that are in place in the Department/FASS/NUS.
• Guiding the student in the selection and planning of an original research topic that can be successfully completed within the expected time frame for the degree program.
• Establishing with the student a realistic timetable for completion of various phases of the program.
• Providing students with realistic times for provision of feedback and ensuring students adhere to the timetable.
• Ensuring that students have an understanding of the relevant theories and the methodological and technical skills necessary for the research, including provision of information through an ethical review process where applicable.
• Establishing (with the PhD student) a TC early on in the student’s research, and ensuring that the TC meets with the student at least twice per year, as a committee, and provides an annual written report of the student’s progress.
• Being accessible to give advice and provide feedback.
• Making arrangements to ensure continuity of supervision during leaves or an extended period of absence.
• Encouraging participation in research group meetings, departmental seminars and other research related events in the university.
• Advising a PhD student on which of the two optional thesis pathways is likely to be most suitable.
• Encouraging and assisting students to attend and present work at local, national, or international conferences and to publish their work in appropriate
journals.

- Advising on matters of career options, job market, preparation of the CV, and strategies for launching a career in research.
- Contributing to the student’s professional development and funding through letters of reference and general advice.
- Ensuring that the research environment is safe, equitable, and free from harassment and discrimination.
- Avoiding personal or business relationships that may constitute a conflict of interest.
- Being honest with the student when academic performance is not meeting expectations. While dealing with inadequate academic performance can be difficult, it is in no one’s best interests to prolong a program of study when success is unlikely.

Responsibilities of the student include:

- Being proactive in discussing with their main supervisor the programme of taught modules that best suit their needs and interests, and how to balance the demands of taught modules and associated assignments with showing progress in their research.
- Becoming familiar with, and keeping to, the rules, policies, and procedures relating to graduate research that are in place in the Department/FASS/NUS.
- Adhering to all deadlines and policies regarding registration, applications for conference and fieldwork funding, leaves of absence, limitations on time, dissertation submission and graduation.
- Being actively involved in research group meetings and seminars in the Department and, if appropriate, outside the Department (e.g. research cluster meetings in FASS, Asia Research Institute etc.). Note that attendance by graduate research students at departmental seminars is regarded as highly desirable; graduate research students are expected to attend departmental seminars irrespective of whether they relate directly to their own research.
- Preparing a research plan and timetable in consultation with the supervisor(s) as a basis for the program of study, including any proposed fieldwork.
- Proactively arranging supervisory meetings, meeting with the supervisor(s) when requested and reporting regularly on progress and results.
- Establishing a TC, with the assistance of the supervisor(s), early on in the dissertation stage.
- Keeping supervisors informed on how they can be contacted and informing them of any significant changes that may affect the progress of the research.
- Acquiring the necessary health and safety skills and IRB clearance for undertaking the proposed research and adhering to the risk assessment and ethical practices followed in the Department.
- Maintaining good records of each stage of the research.
Cross-cultural issues
Graduate students and faculty in the Department of Geography are from a variety of cultural backgrounds. While this makes for a highly invigorating and diverse working environment, and yields great benefits for research, teaching and social activities in general, misunderstandings may arise from time to time. The risks of misunderstandings can be mitigated, however, and both student and supervisor(s) should take note of – and where relevant consider discussing during their meetings – the following in particular:

- Differences in culture and beliefs that may exist between a student and supervisor(s)/members of the TC.
- Different assumptions about the nature of research. For example, a supervisor may expect considerable initiative in research, whereas the student may assume a student’s role is to provide the answers to research questions posed by their supervisor(s).
- Differences in how students and their supervisors cope with the student-supervisor relationship. This can lead to students appearing overly formal or deferential, or a supervisor expecting a level of formality the student is not used to. Students from cultures with a high deference to and respect of authority may treat administrative staff, technicians, and more junior students less respectfully than their supervisor(s) because of an ingrained need to differentiate.
- Differences in how comfortable people are with having their work and progress questioned and critiqued. In cultures with high power differences (e.g. some Asian cultures), students may be highly reluctant to question their supervisors or other faculty, whereas in cultures with low power differences (e.g. some Western cultures), frequent challenges and constructive criticisms may be the norm. Similarly some students/supervisor(s) may be far more comfortable in having their work and ideas critiqued than others.
- Differences in cultural norms. Cultural norms can affect the importance of “saving face” in relationships. Students, for example, may be unwilling to ask questions lest it reveal a lack of knowledge on their part, or because questions might cause a supervisor to lose face by implying that he or she had not explained something adequately.
- Differences in communication styles. Some cultures value indirectness, others directness.
- Differences in how rules and regulations are viewed. In some cultures, rules can be questioned and individual exceptions may be expected. At NUS, rules are usually considered to be reasonable, are to be followed, and apply to all. Students and supervisors can expect that rules and regulations relating to graduate research (e.g. rules relating to plagiarism, deadlines etc.) will be applied.

Adapting to a new culture, including the expectations of the discipline, at the same time as getting used to a new university environment, may take time and can be stressful and confusing. Supervisors have a responsibility to help mentor their students during this transition, while students should try to identify behaviours that are affected by cultural differences and be prepared to modify them. Potential misunderstandings can often be minimized by strategies such as depersonalising and
anticipating the issue; for example, by supervisors saying that they know some students may be uncomfortable asking questions, but questions are expected and welcome.

**Problem solving**
For both student and supervisor, the path towards successful completion of a thesis can be fraught with difficulties. While these guidelines are aimed at mitigating the chances of problems arising, problems may still occur. If the latter is the case, the following suggestions may help resolve the problems:

- Seek help early (as per the “Seek help early” section of the Orientation Guide);
- Try to be objective and rational, and find the root cause of the problem;
- Be prepared to compromise and be flexible – problems are rarely one-sided;
- Seek advice – take advantage of the experiences of others;
- If possible, seek resolution at as low a level as possible – formal procedures are often complex and highly time consuming, and the outcome may be satisfactory to neither party; and
- Be prepared to go outside the Department for assistance if necessary, and particularly for the most difficult cases.

Sources of information used in compiling these guidelines are listed in Appendix 3 below.
Appendix 1: Checklists for students and supervisors

The following checklists are meant as prompts – reminders of what ought to be covered during early student-supervisor meetings. They are not meant to be the basis of a formal contract.

Checklist for Students

I have had initial meetings with my supervisor(s) and have discussed (please place a tick alongside those topics listed below that have been covered):

Potential or actual thesis topic.
How and when a Thesis Committee will be finalised (for PhD students only).
Funding.
Applying for scholarships and awards.
Teaching duties.
Availability of space, including laboratory space (if relevant).
Expected hours of work.
Timelines and major milestones, including anticipated completion time.
Nature of supervisory guidance.
Frequency and style of meetings.
Who arranges formal meetings, and will a written record of each formal meeting be kept (and if so by who).
Methods of informal communication.
Conventional PhD thesis route, or alternative Articles-based PhD pathway?
Turnaround time for responses to major questions, and comments on drafts of thesis chapters, publications, or conference presentations.
Intellectual property (IP) issues such as authorship on publications, conference presentations.
Health and Safety and Ethical (Institutional Review Board) considerations.
I understand and have discussed with my supervisor(s) my program requirements including (not all may be applicable – but please place a tick alongside those topics that have been covered):

Most suitable core modules.

Extra modules.

Language/breadth requirement.

Laboratory protocol and training needs.

Other training needs (e.g. GIS, statistics etc.).

Thesis proposal.

Qualifying Exam.

Departmental seminar and Research Group attendance.

Other (specify).
Checklist for Supervisors (main and co-supervisors, unless otherwise stated)

Please place a tick beside the items below that you have thought about and/or covered during discussions with a student supervisee.

To establish a collegial environment, I will:

Create a positive work and learning environment free from discrimination and harassment.

Where I can, provide advice on professional development and both academic and non-academic career opportunities.

Be available as a first point of contact for conflict resolution or during moments of transition.

I will undertake the following academic mentoring activities:

Assist the student where needed about the requirements for their degree, policies of the Department and Faculty, and with regard to Health and Safety and Institutional Review Board considerations. (Main supervisor for PhD students).

Advise and approve, if appropriate, all aspects of the student’s academic program including modules, Qualifying Exam, preferred thesis pathway (there are two optional pathways in Geography – the conventional thesis pathway or the Articles-based pathway), thesis proposal requirements, etc. (Main supervisor for PhD students).

Assist the student in navigating their program of study and the university community.

Help the student formulate an appropriate research project. Discuss the required knowledge and skills to undertake the desired research program, the expected time to completion as well as the level of independence that is expected.

Meet regularly and frequently to provide constructive input into the student’s research project and provide an assessment of the student’s progress.

Discuss issues of authorship and intellectual property early in the student’s program.
I have discussed funding issues with the supervisee including:

Level and duration of research-related funding that will be provided to the student, and/or are available to apply for, including support for conferences and travel for research. Level of assistance with funding applications etc.

Availability of research and study space as well as the protocol for requesting additional resources or equipment. (Main supervisor for PhD students).

I have discussed academic program issues with the supervisee including:

How and when the Thesis Committee (TC) will be formed, the role of the TC as well as my role as main supervisor in selecting appropriate and eligible members. (Main supervisor for PhD students).

Ensure that the TC meets a minimum of twice per year to assess the progress of the graduate student, and provides written feedback on those meetings. (Main supervisor for PhD students).

Frequency, length, and format of individual and/or group meetings including the preferred method of communication and timelines for feedback. (Main supervisor for PhD students).

Roles and responsibilities of others involved in the student’s research program (e.g., postdoctoral fellows, lab managers, fellow students, etc.) and laboratory etiquette. (Main supervisor for PhD students).

Expectations for student work hours and vacation. (Main supervisor for PhD students).

Any extended absences (i.e., sabbatical, research leave, conference travel, etc.) for myself or others critically involved in the student’s research and a plan for continuity of supervision. (Main supervisor for PhD students).

How an external appraiser will be selected for the final examination of the student’s thesis. (Main supervisor for PhD students).

Other (specify)
Appendix 2: Record sheet for supervisory meetings

Graduate Research Student Meetings Record

Regular and frequent meetings should take place between supervisors and their research students. A brief record should be kept of each formal supervision meeting, for which a template is provided below. This process is to be initiated by the research student, e-mailed to the supervisor/co-supervisor, and, if necessary, returned to the research student for amendments. The supervisor/co-supervisor should retain copies of the report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student name:</th>
<th>(Co-)supervisor name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree and year of course:</td>
<td>Date &amp; location of supervision meeting:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD/M Soc Sci</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time / Year of study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time / Year of study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working thesis title:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points discussed:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreed action points:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research activity undertaken/completed since last meeting:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research training needs identified:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student signature: (Co-)supervisor’s signature: Date: Date:
Appendix 3: Useful sources of information


Faculty of Graduate Studies (2007) Responsibilities in the Supervisory Relationship Policy, University of Victoria.

https://www.uvic.ca/graduatestudies/assets/docs/docs/policies/Supervisory%20Relationship%202007.pdf


https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/Documents/supervision+guidelines.pdf

In addition the University of Western Ontario (UWO) has made available an impressive range of resources relating to best supervisory practice, at:

https://www.uwo.ca/tsc/faculty_programs/graduate_supervision.html

UWO also hosts a series of regular brown bag seminars that focus graduate supervision, known as the “Supervision Conversations Series”:

https://www.uwo.ca/tsc/faculty_programs/supervision%20conversations%20.html
Appendix 3: Regulations concerning the Article-based PhD Thesis pathway in Geography

FASS PhD students from the departments indicated below may choose to submit an article-based PhD thesis as an alternative route to completing a PhD thesis. This requires the approval of their Supervisor, Thesis Committee members and the Head of Department/Programme or nominee.

(1) Economics
(2) English Language & Literature – only students in English Language & Linguistics
(3) Geography
(4) Japanese Studies
(5) Malay Studies
(6) Philosophy
(7) Political Science
(8) Psychology
(9) Social Work
(10) Sociology - only students in Sociology
(11) South Asian Studies

Students in the Department of Geography opting for the Articles-base pathway will be required to submit the following:

(a) **Three journal articles** that fulfill the following conditions: (i) the student must be the lead author on the articles; (ii) the journal articles must be based on work carried out since the student’s period of registration as a doctoral candidate at NUS, and relate directly to the PhD research in the Department/Programme in which the student is registered; (iii) **at least two** of the articles should be at least formally accepted (if not in press or published) at the time of submission, and the other article(s) should be in a publishable format, appropriate for submission to a stated journal; and (iv) targeted journals must be reputable international journals, agreed beforehand with the student’s thesis committee and endorsed by the Head of Department/Programme or nominee.

(b) An **analytical commentary of 8,000-12,000 words** that fulfills NUS formatting requirements and comprises:
   (i) a title page;
   (ii) an abstract of up to 300 words;
   (iii) an introductory section, highlighting the current state of knowledge and understanding in the field, identifying the research questions that have guided the PhD research, and indicating how the publications submitted contribute to an existing body of knowledge/scholarship;
   (iv) an overview of and justification for the methodology/methods adopted in the research;
   (v) a critical account of how the publications submitted address the guiding research questions and together make a coherent and significant contribution to knowledge and scholarship;
   (vi) an indication of potential future research direction/questions in the field; and
   (vii) where the portfolio includes jointly authored publications, a statement explaining the student’s contribution to those papers.
Students in the Department of Geography are required to format their submission with the analytical commentary forming the main body of the thesis, together with an appendices comprising full copies of the journal articles.

Other Requirements
A student opting for the article-based PhD thesis route must have met, in full, the same modular and Qualifying Examination (QE) requirements of the degree as students on the regular thesis pathway. In other words, all other requirements for the PhD degree will remain. There will be no change in the coursework requirements, or in the examination process.

The work submitted under the article-based PhD thesis route should clearly meet the standard requirements of a PhD by thesis, in terms of language, coherence and most importantly, contribution to the discipline. The article-based PhD thesis will require the same amount and standard of research as a PhD by Thesis and is in no way expected to be an easier option. It might in fact be more difficult as it will have to be assessed by both journal reviewers and thesis examiners. The successful publication of journal articles included in the submission will not in and of itself be sufficient to guarantee that the thesis will be passed by the examiners. Students will still be expected to make revisions to the articles and commentary if required by the examiners, even if the articles have been accepted by/published in journals.

Other Important Points to Note
- Students will have to decide on whether to complete the normal PhD by thesis or one based on articles, latest within a year of passing the PhD QE using an application form available from the Graduate administrator in the Department.
- The same journal article cannot appear in more than one thesis, even if there is equal co-authorship of the article.
- All copyright and permission issues must be resolved prior to uploading of the thesis. As per normal, students have to use the write-up in the Electronic Thesis/Dissertation (“Thesis”) Submission form, RO.667/09, to seek formal approval with the respective journal editors to reproduce the articles.
- Students can subsequently choose to opt-out of either route, but must do so before the examiners are nominated.
Appendix 4: NUS Geography Graduate Student Strategy 2017-2021

Remit

To define clearly the Department's aims regarding graduate studies in the Department of Geography, including admissions and curriculum development, the way(s) and, where appropriate, a timeframe in which these aims may best be addressed and a transparent and consultative process through which these aims may be updated from time to time.

Background

Geography at NUS has a relatively long history, having been established in 1928 as one of three initial subjects offered in the then newly formed Faculty of Arts, Raffles College (which eventually became the National University of Singapore in 1980). The Department of Geography has grown hugely over the years, and is today ranked among the top Geography departments in the world. Numbers of graduate students in the Department have also grown, particularly over the last decade.

As a top ranked department in a leading global university, Geography at NUS aims to offer a world-class graduate programme that enhances the experiences and professional development of graduate students and provides a solid foundation for future career development.

The Aim

To build and maintain a graduate school commensurate with the Department’s high-standing internationally.

Strategy

- Focus on recruitment of and support for high quality graduate students.
- Provide a high quality of graduate studies that advances knowledge and its application, and that is of high international quality and impact.
- Create and maintain rich and engaging graduate learning environments that derive maximum benefit from the diversity of opportunities available in Singapore and that reflect the University’s unique Asian location and global outlook.
- Ensure a sufficiently broad, challenging and rigorous structured programme of taught modules, comprising subject-specific modules, knowledge and transferable skills, to assist the successful completion of a graduate research student’s thesis and to enable the Department to host a high quality MSc Applied GIS programme of international standing.
- Help implement University- and Faculty-level strategies and initiatives relating to graduate studies, including the funding of graduate research scholarships from non-Ministry of Education Research Scholarship Budget (MoE RSB) sources.
- Support a collegiate and enabling working environment.
Objectives and Actions

- NUS Geography to become the premier place in the world by 2020 for PhD students based in Asia to carry out geographical research.
- NUS Geography to increase the proportional representation of Singaporean citizens and Permanent Residents among its graduate research student community.
- PEAS, SCG and TEC research groups to maintain at a high level their graduate student-oriented activities, including graduate research student recruitment.
- NUS Geography to recruit approximately 12 high quality PhD students per year.
- All PhD students to be co-supervised, with responsibility for graduate student supervision distributed as fairly as possible among faculty.
- NUS Geography graduate students and faculty to be kept aware of new developments of relevance to the graduate community and associated faculty, such as the introduction of an alternative to the conventional PhD thesis pathway (the Articles-based PhD thesis pathway) and revised guidelines for supervision.
- NUS Geography to invigorate existing and investigate and, where appropriate, initiate new joint graduate programmes with other leading universities globally.
- Members of Geography faculty to seek additional support for graduate students in the Department from both within and outside the university.
- NUS Geography to ensure that its MSc Applied GIS continues to meet the highest international standards in terms of the facilities provided, the modules offered and the opportunities for research and training furnished.
- Graduate Studies Committee to review annually its Graduate Student Strategy and to make the Department aware of any changes to the Strategy thought necessary.

Graduate Student Strategy originally compiled by Dr GJH Oliver, Professor DL Higgitt, Professor RJ Wasson and A. Professor J Zhang 14.3.2013 and updated and agreed by Graduate Studies Committee 20-01-2017
Appendix 5: Graduate student representatives in the Department of Geography, NUS

The overall role of the graduate student representatives in the Department is to maintain a vibrant, informed and well-resourced community of graduate students in Geography at NUS.

Each year the community of graduate students in Geography will elect or otherwise identify two or three representatives. Both must be enrolled as full-time students in the Department of Geography at NUS: ideally one will be a Masters student, the other a PhD student. One of the representatives should be familiar with laboratory facilities in the Department. The term of office shall normally be one full year. However, representatives may serve for a second full term of office with the support of their peers in the Department.

Specifically, the responsibilities of the graduate student representatives are to:

1) Act as advocates for graduate students and graduate student issues in Geography at meetings of the Faculty and departmental Graduate Studies committees. The Representatives are also expected to communicate significant events and policy and practice decisions affecting graduate students back to graduate students in Geography
2) Be knowledgeable about departmental and Faculty resources, policies and initiatives
3) Host standing meetings – preferably on a monthly basis and of an informal nature - with graduate students in Geography through which graduate students can raise relevant issues and can keep updated with regard to changes in policy and practice in the Department/Faculty, departmental/Faculty events such as seminars and research group meetings, and graduate opportunities (including those relating to financial support)
4) Participate in discussion of all matters of departmental Graduate Studies Committee business that impact graduate students in Geography, except those related to the evaluation or performance of other graduate students
5) Respect the privacy of students who come to the representative in his/her official capacity.

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4 Meetings that are held at approximately the same time of day on the same day of the week
Appendix 6: Information on the PhD Qualifying Exam

1. INTRODUCTION

Departmental policy is to accept only those PhD students whose proposed research topic can be supervised, adequately, by existing members of staff.

All PhD students in the Department will have at least two supervisors. Each PhD student will also have a Thesis Committee.

All graduate research candidates admitted from academic year 2004-2005 come under the new framework for graduate studies. Under this structure, the PhD Qualifying Examination (QE) of PhD candidates comprises the following components*:

- A comprehensive examination (CE); and
- An oral examination that includes a student’s defence of their PhD thesis proposal

*More details below.

The comprehensive examination (CE) tests the general competence and disciplinary awareness of the candidate, whereas the oral examination provides an opportunity for a more in-depth questioning of a student’s competence as an early stage researcher and the feasibility and merit of their PhD thesis proposal.

1.1. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PHD STUDENTS

Responsibilities of PhD students include:

- taking responsibility for their own research and personal and professional development;
- maintaining frequent and regular contact with supervisors: meetings with supervisors should take place not less than twice a semester and more frequently if the Department’s Graduate Studies Committee so decides;
- preparing adequately for meetings with supervisors and the Thesis Committee;
- setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting required work and generally maintaining satisfactory progress within their programme of research;
- making supervisors aware of any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect their work;
- attending any development opportunities (research-related and other) that have been identified when agreeing their development needs with their supervisors;
- adhering to NUS’s regulations and policies regarding research degree programmes, including policies and guidelines on health and safety, insurance, intellectual property, ethical research conduct and academic misconduct; and
- contributing fully to relevant activities in the Department and more broadly within NUS, including meetings organized by the Department’s Graduate Student Representatives, research seminars, research group meetings (including reading groups) and the annual Geography Graduate Workshop.

1.2. TIMEFRAME TO ATTEMPT QE

Faculty’s recommendations

For students admitted from Semester I 2009/2010, the QE should be passed within the first two years of the PhD candidature. Within this period, a second PhD QE may be attempted should the candidate fail at the first attempt. This applies to both full-time and part-time
candidates. For research scholars, the scholarship will only be suspended upon the recommendation of the Department. A student who is unable to pass the PhD QE by the end of the second year of his/her candidature may be downgraded to the Masters programme if he/she has shown sufficient progress to complete a Masters thesis. For research scholars, the scholarship in such cases will be terminated.

**Department’s recommendations**
The first attempt at QE is to take place by the 20th month of a student’s PhD candidature, with any second attempt – if necessary - being scheduled for within the following two months. A recommendation will be made to the Board of Graduate Studies to terminate a candidate’s registration if the second attempt also ends in failure.

### 1.3 ELIGIBILITY TO ATTEMPT PH.D. QUALIFYING EXAM

Students must satisfy the following conditions before they are allowed to sit the PhD QE:

- Complete a minimum of five modules in either 5000 and/or 6000 levels. Up to one module can be level-4000, with a minimum CAP of 3.50;
- Where applicable, obtain satisfactory grades (at least grade C) in ES5001A, the intermediate level, graduate English language module hosted by the Centre for English Language Communication.

### 1.4 THESIS COMMITTEE

The Thesis Committee provides additional support and guidance to PhD students in Geography. The principal purposes of the Thesis Committee are to review the progress of a student’s research programme and professional development, to supplement where appropriate the advice and guidance given to the student by the supervisors, and to grade a student’s performance in the Qualifying Examination. If the Thesis Committee is not functioning effectively, a student should, in the first instance and promptly, alert the Graduate coordinator/Advisor (or his/her delegate).

A student’s Thesis Committee comprises at least three persons, at least two are from the Department of Geography, with one a supervisor of the student. The composition of the Committee is decided in consultation with the supervisors. All members should be contactable as they will be involved in overseeing the progress of the candidate. Members can be from within the Department, from another department/faculty of NUS or from another university or external organisation approved by the Head.

### 1.5 SUPERVISORS AND SUPERVISION

One of the supervisors of a PhD student will be nominated the “main” supervisor for official university purposes (e.g. for signing off on conference fund applications etc). Other than this, and unless circumstances dictate otherwise, joint supervisors are expected to have contributed equally, more or less, to the supervision of a student over their period of research (including completion of their thesis).

Although supervisors may encourage their supervisees to seek advice on particular academic topics from other colleagues, supervisors have the primary responsibility for directing the research to a satisfactory conclusion. It is therefore crucially important that supervisors should approve the general content and planning of the research and should agree with their students a schedule of supervisory meetings, and complete the supervisor-supervisee checklist provided, soon after a student first registers.
In general, any difficulties encountered by a student in obtaining adequate supervision should be referred in the first instance, to the Graduate coordinator/Advisor (or his/her delegate) and then to the Head of Department. Any warnings, anxieties, or problems concerning research work that a supervisor may have about specific aspects of a student’s research work, or issues of academic integrity, should also be made known as early as possible to the Graduate coordinator/Advisor (or his/her delegate). The aim is to address any problems encountered in the supervisor-student relation confidentially in a timely and civilized manner.

Students who have not completed their thesis by the end of their normal period of registration are strongly advised to remain in regular touch with their supervisor until they are ready to submit their thesis for examination; for many theses, a supervisor’s advice is at its most valuable and essential at the stage of writing the final draft.

1.6 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CANDIDATE REGARDING THE QE AND THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE

The candidate is responsible for keeping his/her Thesis Committee informed of his/her thesis work and of his/her general progress in the PhD programme.

Supervisors should be consulted for advice on which modules to take.

The candidate must prepare for the QE [Written (CE) and Oral (OE)] in conjunction with the Thesis Committee.

The candidate must take note of the expectations in a QE, namely a comprehensive understanding of relevant literature and the ability to place their chosen area of research in a broader context, critical thinking skills, an ability to apply concepts & methods to real world situations, an ability to evaluate ideas and arguments, knowledge about paradigm shifts and the implications of these shifts, an awareness of any health, safety and ethical considerations relevant to their research plans and an ability to articulate and defend their own views.

The thesis committee monitors the half yearly online progress of the candidate for his/her whole candidature. Only the main supervisor of the candidate can submit the remarks online. However, other members of the Thesis Committee can view the comments input by the supervisor. Therefore, a supervisor should make sure that the comments and evaluation submitted reflect the agreed views of the Thesis Committee.

The Thesis Committee is to decide on the detail of the actual format and content of the CE, in terms of the total number of questions set, their focus and their scope. Note however that at least three questions should be set, one per section. The Thesis Committee should also decide upon the standard of answers regarded as acceptable, while keeping in mind that any shortcomings in a student’s performance in the CE can be followed-up in the OE (see (a) below).

(a) The OE continues as the main opportunity for a student to defend their proposed PhD research to the Thesis Committee. The OE also provides the Committee with an opportunity to examine in more detail a student’s responses in the CE examination, in addition to questions about their proposed area of research. Moreover, a student with a CE performance deemed sub-standard should be informed beforehand that they can expect to be questioned in depth about their CE performance at the oral. In such cases the OE provides a student with an opportunity to redress an unsatisfactory performance in the CE. All supervisors of a student are
welcome to attend the OE as observers of proceedings: supervisors cannot ask questions of the student during the OE.

The Thesis Committee is responsible for the nomination of examiners for the thesis. The nominations are not to be made known to the candidate.

2. COMPONENTS OF PHD QE

2.1 COMPREHENSIVE EXAM (CE)

1. The CE is completed before the OE.

2. The candidate must submit a bibliography of literature relevant to their proposed research of ca. 20-30 titles together with a short (ca. 500 words) summary of their research at least TWO MONTHS before their scheduled CE. This is to help the Thesis Committee decide on the content of the CE, and in particular sections 1) Conceptual and theoretical framings and 2) Methods and methodology (see format of examination that follows).

3. The CE comprises a single examination produced and marked the members of the Thesis Committee who are not a student’s supervisor in which a student is given UP TO seven days to answer several questions. The examination is "take home", with students allowed to use whatever sources of information they would normally use in their research (including, if relevant, online reference search engines (such as Google Scholar) etc.). Responses to questions are to be produced in digital form. Students will be asked to guarantee that their CE responses were their own work and expected to reference correctly the sources of information referred to in their responses, while examiners will be able to use plagiarism-checking software if there is any doubt. Students are expected to carry out the CE in addition to their other responsibilities as research students.

Scope of CE
Ultimately the scope of the CE is for the Thesis Committee to decide. Questions on the CE would normally cover a student’s chosen area of research. Others might be more general, and ask questions about, for example, the broader context for a student’s research, ethical considerations, health and safety, the politics of science, the roles of theory and observation and the contribution that research makes to society. A student could also be expected to refer not only to information in the published realm, but also material covered in a seminar, workshop, conference presentation or reading group meeting they have attended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format of Examination</th>
<th>Number of days given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptions</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of papers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Seven days</strong> (maximum) (the paper is “take home” and therefore not subject to invigilation or limits on sources of information utilised. Students can submit their answers before the seven days have passed if they so wish.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of questions on paper</td>
<td><strong>Up to six</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of questions to be answered:</td>
<td><strong>Three</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Form of answers: Typed using a word processor and submitted in digital form. The three answers in total MUST NOT exceed 6000 words (including references, figure captions and tables etc.). No answer to be longer than 3000 words in total (including references, figure captions and tables etc.). Answers should combine evidence of depth of understanding with an indication that a student has a good awareness of the broader context.

Structure of paper Three sections. Students must answer one question from each section.

The three sections (and their respective scope) are:
(i) Conceptual and theoretical framings: To cover, for example, links with broader topic/live problem in Geography, theoretical approach and conceptual positioning.
(ii) Methods and methodology: To cover, for example, methodological framework, techniques of data collection (including fieldwork) and analysis, ethics and positionality.
(iii) General: To cover, for example, current, related major research questions in the discipline, role of research in wider society (e.g. policy implications), new developments in related areas of research etc.

The Thesis Committee should agree that the questions forming the CE are fair and that there is no duplication in the questions before submitting them to the Department one working week before each scheduled exam. A member of the Graduate Committee will be asked to vet the questions to ensure parity.

2.2 ORAL EXAM (OE)
1. The OE is taken after the CE.

2. Whether the candidate can take the OE is not dependent on the performance of the CE. Pass/Fail for the QE will be based on BOTH the oral and CE components. Only the final grade for the QE (i.e. Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory) needs to be submitted.

3. The candidate in consultation with the Thesis Committee sets a date for the OE, after checking the availability of the Thesis Committee members and the Head of Department, and informs the Department administrator (in this case, Pauline Lee). The Department recommends that the QE to be conducted by the 20th month of candidature.

4. The candidate is to submit a thesis proposal 6-8 weeks before the date of the OE in order to give the Thesis Committee enough time to read and frame questions. The word count for the QE proposal is between 5,000 to 10,000 words using 12 font size with double spacing. This word count excludes bibliography, tables, figures and end notes. Thesis Committee members are urged to read the proposal carefully before the oral examination in order to be fair to the candidate.

5. Supervisors may be allowed to comment, if circumstances so necessitate, during the oral defence of the research proposal. The OE will be conducted by other members of the Thesis Committee together with the Coordinator of the Graduate Studies programme in the Department or his/her delegate.

3. PLAGIARISM
Candidates are reminded that plagiarism is a serious offence in NUS.
Appendix 7: Teaching Guidelines for Graduate Students in the Department of Geography

14 March 2013

These guidelines apply to Research Scholarship (RS) students and Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs). RS holders are required to work an average of up to 6 hours per week, of which an average of up to 4 hours consists of direct teaching contact time. GTAs are employed to work 16 hours per week, of which an average of up to 6 hours consist of direct teaching contact time.

What kind of work does ‘teaching contact time’ refer to?

This will vary according to the demands of the module(s) to which you are assigned and the needs of the lecturer(s) concerned. However, in both human and physical geography modules, teaching contact time may include: conducting/assisting in tutorials; conducting/assisting in practical sessions; assisting lecturers in fieldtrips; being available for consultation to students with module-related queries.

Will I be allocated to modules that directly relate to my own academic experience and research interests?

We do try to match you with modules that relate to your existing experience and expertise. We recognize that in cases where the match is not close, you may need to spend more time preparing for your teaching duties.

Will preparation time be counted towards my hours of work?

Yes, attendance at lectures relating to tutorials, practical sessions or fieldtrips that you will be teaching should count towards your overall hours of employment.

What other duties may I be expected to perform?

Again, the expectations will vary from module to module and from lecturer to lecturer. The range of possible duties includes:

- Marking student CA assignments
- Calculating marks for tutorial/practical sessions
- Collating overall CA marks
- Photocopying module-related materials
- Returning graded assignments to students
- Setting up apparatus for lab/practical sessions
- Helping to maintain safety and order in the Geolab through routine checks
- Exam invigilation
- Marking up to 50% of exam scripts
What can I do to make sure that I contribute effectively and efficiently?

- Ensure that you understand the expectations of the lecture(s) that you have been assigned to assist. Ask for clarification if there is any uncertainty.

- Check to ensure that your schedule permits you to carry out the duties assigned to you. If your schedule does not fit with assigned work, please discuss possibilities for rearrangement with the lecturer and other students (if any) allocated to the module. If such rearrangement is not possible, contact Ms Pauline Lee regarding possible reallocation of duties.

- Familiarize yourself with the IVLE site for the module(s) in which you are involved, and make sure that you are listed on the relevant site(s).

- In the case of new GTAs involved in conducting tutorials or practical sessions, make sure that you observe in advance at least one session conducted by a more experienced GTA to see how things should be done.

- Make sure that you attend lectures that are relevant to your own duties – whether that be as preparation for direct teaching contact time or in terms of assignment/examination marking.

- In the case of physical geographers, ensure that you understand the use and maintenance of equipment, and setting up apparatus for practicals as needed by module lecturers. These will both entail liaising with the relevant lab technician(s).

- In cases where you have been assigned exam invigilation duties, it is compulsory for you to attend a briefing organized by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Information about this briefing will be emailed to you by the FASS Dean’s office.

- Try to be flexible and mindful that GTA duties provide opportunities to gain experience of a diverse range of aspects of academic working life.

How will my performance be evaluated?

All modules and teachers (including lecturers as well as RS holders and GTAs) at NUS are subject to student evaluation at the end of semester. Quantitative evaluations are made on a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being the highest score). RS holders and GTAs are expected to receive overall evaluations of 3.5 or above. In addition, in order to be eligible for contract renewal, GTAs and RS holders must maintain a CAP of 3.0 or above (in the case of Masters students) or 3.5 or above (in the case of PhD students) and receive a rating of ‘Satisfactory’ or higher in their supervisor’s end-of-semester progress report.

Whom should I contact if I have further questions or concerns?

- The coordinator for the module(s) to which you have been assigned.

- At Department level, Pauline Lee: geoleep@nus.edu.sg

- At Faculty level, Susan Khoo: faskhoos@nus.edu.sg