

Clark University

Graduate School of Geography



Doctoral Program

Program Structure and Handbook



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PROGRAM/HANDBOOK OVERVIEW

The PhD program curriculum for Clark University's Graduate School of Geography (hereafter referred to as the GSG, or the School) is organized to give a broad view of the field of geography and its teaching, as well as specialized approaches to selected subfields. The subfields are organized in accordance with the research interests and teaching competencies of the faculty. These subfields include: Earth System Science, Geographic Information Science/Remote Sensing, Human-Environment/Nature-Society, and Urban and Economic geography. It is not uncommon for students to build research projects and committees that cross between subfields; these options are limited only by the general nature of the offerings and the interests and competencies of the faculty. The School encourages study on the 'frontiers' of geography, study that links with work outside the discipline to tackle problems in an interdisciplinary manner and to create 'new geographies.' Such endeavors, however, should not lose sight of the traditions that mark the discipline and the fact that the degrees awarded certify substantial expertise in the discipline. Graduate studies in the School, therefore, should seek a balance between knowledge of the discipline, or several of its subfields, and knowledge specific to the major research foci of the student.

This document describes policies, procedures, expectations, norms, and requirements currently in effect, practiced in the GSG. The graduate program is reviewed regularly, and it is occasionally necessary to make changes to the program GSG handbook. When **major** changes to program structure or requirements occur (e.g., Progress-to-Degree expectations), students have the option of following the program structure/requirements that were in effect at the time of matriculation into the program, or the new program structure/requirements. Important to note is that the GSG handbook serves as a program-specific guide and that many policies/expectations/requirements (e.g., minimum grades, residency status) are, in fact, determined by the Graduate School at Clark – the current Graduate School handbook can be found on the main page of Clark's Graduate Arts and Sciences¹ and this should be reviewed in parallel with the GSG handbook. If any inconsistencies between the two documents are apparent, please reach out to the Director and Associate Director so they can rectify the matter.

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

The Associate Director serves as the Graduate Studies Committee Chair. The Associate Director is appointed by the Director for a period of three academic years, with the possibility of renewal. The Associate Director has the responsibility for coordinating the graduate admissions process and supervising the passage of all graduate students through the Graduate School of Geography in a timely and orderly manner. This work is performed in close consultation with PhD students, advisors and committee members, and with the support of the Director and Department Administrator. The Associate Director is involved in approving decisions regarding students' completion of program requirements, and is the person with whom issues relating to particular students and interpretations of the Program structure must first be raised. The Associate Director meets with the Department Administrator and the Director regularly to discuss major pending decisions and the progress of the graduate student body as whole. Together with the

¹<https://www.clarku.edu/schools/graduate-arts-and-sciences/>

faculty, they assess each student's progress-to-degree annually and formally communicate expectations to students for the coming year. The Director retains final decisions pertaining to student funding.

RESIDENCE REQUIREMENTS²

Full-Time Resident status normally applies to students registered for three courses per semester. The three-course load includes directed reading, directed research, and directed writing courses as well as regularly scheduled courses. Students are required to be enrolled as full-time students taking either courses or directed readings (or some combination) up until the doctoral examinations and proposal are complete, meaning the All-But-Dissertation (ABD) or PhD Candidacy status has been achieved. Once a student is advanced to ABD or Candidacy status they are still considered to be full-time residents, taking three credits of directed study for field work, data analysis, and/or dissertation writing. The total time in residence, starting from matriculation, is normally four to five years and can be up to six years if there are mitigating circumstances that caused a delay, which must be approved by the student's advisor(s) and the Associate Director. After six years, students may be considered non-resident and subject to the University's non-resident fee.

Non-Resident status is accorded to students who have completed all their course work, including field work (if applicable), and have exhausted the five (or exceptionally six) year resident period. Non-Resident students are those who are typically not physically present at Clark except on an occasional basis, have only their dissertation to complete, and are only sporadically using Clark facilities (library, computer, etc.), although these facilities are fully available to them. However, they must still register for three non-resident credits to retain full-time student status and receive full tuition remission. Non-Resident students must pay the University non-resident fee. Non-resident students are not allowed to be a TA/RA. Per the Graduate School's guidelines, non-resident status is limited to a maximum of three years but only if progress-to-degree in the GSG is at an acceptable, approved level.

Part-time status: Clark University does not allow part-time status for Ph.D. students receiving tuition remission.

A **Leave of Absence** may be granted to students who can present a valid reason for temporary suspension of their graduate studies with the approval of the Associate Director, Director, and the Dean of the Graduate School. Such leaves will only be granted for a clearly designated time period that will not exceed one year in total (as per University requirements). Students on leave of absence are not eligible for loan deferments or any Clark benefits, and time on leave does not count towards progress to degree. GSG makes every effort to consider individual circumstances (see "mitigating circumstances" under "Assessing Satisfactory Progress" below).

All students therefore have one of three statuses: full time, non-resident, or on an approved leave of absence. Otherwise, the student is assumed to have withdrawn and must file for reinstatement. In order to recommence graduate studies, reinstatement must be approved by

² Residency is a University term reflecting a student's full-time status. It does NOT bear on where you live, or on international visa status. Non-resident students are not allowed to be a TA/RA.

the Associate Director, Director, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

COURSEWORK, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

To obtain a PhD, students are required to register for a minimum of 8 semesters of courses (including directed readings, research, skills courses, and thesis/dissertation work). All graduate students, as indicated above and per Clark's requirements, must register for at least three units per semester to maintain resident status and their tuition remission.

Required Courses and Skills Proficiency

Required Courses and First-Year Orientation

All entering students must complete GEOG 368 (Geographic Thought: Theories, Traditions, and Possible Futures) and GEOG 338 (Current Research in Geography – related to the Colloquium Speaker Series, 1 credit for the academic year [0.5 credit per semester])³. The colloquium course requires both attendance at the speaker's (virtual or in-person) talk, and a subsequent meeting of the first-year cohort and the visitor.

All first-year PhD students must also attend a GSG orientation meeting at the beginning of the first year in August, organized and led by the Associate Director and the Department Administrator. This is not the same as any required Graduate School orientation meetings. New students should attend both, given they cover different matters.

Skills Requirement

In addition to these two courses, each student is required to demonstrate proficiency in several skills relevant to geographic research. The GSG offers courses that will fulfill most skill requirements. Students can demonstrate proficiency in a skill by receiving a passing grade in the indicated course. Each student is required to demonstrate proficiency by taking and passing courses in two of the following areas:

1. Multivariate Statistics: Intermediate Quantitative Methods in Geography (GEOG 347).
2. Research design/research methods: Research Proposal Writing in Geography (GEOG 314).
3. Geographic Information Science and Remote Sensing: Intro to Geographic Info Science (SSJ 310), Intro to Remote Sensing (GEOG 383), or another 300-level GEOG course in the GIS cluster (as approved by the student's advisor).
4. Qualitative Research Methods, Skills and Applications (GEOG 310).
5. A foreign language: satisfied by completing a second-year, second-semester college level course or by the independent, examined assessment of a Clark University or other faculty member approved by the Associate Director.
6. Other courses as approved by the student's advisor.

In the case of students entering the GSG with a Master's degree, one of the two required courses may be satisfied with a course taken for the Master's. In certain special cases, a student may demonstrate proficiency in certain skills by taking and passing an examination set by the

³ In cases where the colloquium course conflicts with a seminar/course a first-year student wishes to take, the student should make arrangements with both professors so that the student may attend colloquia on the days affected. If both professors agree, this arrangement can be made and the student should then register for a 0.5 Directed study with the Colloquium Course professor to ensure that they receive proper credit.

Graduate School. In such cases, approval must be granted by the student's advisor and Associate Director.

Students must fulfill the skills requirement by the end of the sixth semester. Students should notify their advisor when they have completed their skills requirement. The chair of the second year review committee will indicate the successful completion of required skills on the second-year review form. The dissertation research proposal will not be processed or approved by the Graduate School until the skills requirements are met.

Beyond the two required courses and skills requirements, students are strongly encouraged to take seminars and other courses that will help advance their dissertation goals. These recommendations are detailed in the following Progress-To-Degree section.

Professional Development

In order to provide for professional development opportunities, the Graduate School of Geography, as determined and organized by CUGS, offers periodic professional development workshops (PDWs). These Professional Development Workshops (PDWs) are planned jointly by GSG faculty and CUGS on topics such as grant preparation, teaching skills/techniques, job interviewing, presenting at AAG, etc. Graduate students must participate in at least three PDWs by the end of year 2. At least two of the PDWs should be led by GSG faculty members. Other PDWs may be led by peers or other faculty/administrators at Clark (e.g., Dean of Research). Additionally, the department highly encourages students to serve at least one semester as a TA while in residence, or as an instructor of record in the summer or after completing 8 semesters of stipend support. Teaching experience is an important part of the PhD training. We make every effort to assign TA positions where possible, or to give instructor opportunities to students for summer courses and regular academic year courses in cases where the student has completed Clark's teaching certification requirement. Other teaching opportunities also become available from time to time in the area, such as at Worcester State, Holy Cross, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Learning how to write grant applications or to secure funding through other external means is another important dimension of professional development. Students are therefore strongly encouraged to actively pursue external sources of funding.

Minimum grade requirements

Per the Graduate School guidelines: "The grades of A and B (with "+" and "-") are acceptable for graduate credit; anything lower than a B- is not acceptable. While grades of C+, C, and C- are recorded as is and calculated in the GPA, they are not accepted for academic credit toward a graduate degree". As stated in the Clark's Graduate Student Handbook⁴, a grade of F in two graduate courses will, in all cases, result in required withdrawal from the PhD program. These Fs can include IN grades that were converted to Fs as described directly below.

Incompletes

An "IN" (Incomplete) "grade" must be agreed upon in a written contract signed by the student and the faculty member leading the course or directed study. The contract involves an agreement on the incomplete work to be performed and the date it is due. The contract form must be completed within two weeks of the last teaching day of the semester. Only students who have

⁴ Available from menu at <https://www.clarku.edu/schools/graduate-arts-and-sciences/>

completed 50% or more of the work associated with the course or directed study are eligible to petition for an incomplete. If this is not the case, the student should withdraw from the course by the end-of-term course withdrawal deadline.

Per Graduate School Guidelines, “Instructors may assign incomplete grades to graduate students at their discretion. **Incompletes that remain unchanged will be converted to F grades by the Registrar’s Office on May 30 for fall IN grades and December 30 for spring and summer IN grades.**”⁵ The F can be converted to a passing grade upon satisfactory completion of the work as judged by the faculty member leading the course, and with approval from the Dean of Graduate Studies. If a student attains a formal leave of absence while they have an “IN” grade, then the subsequent F must be converted to a passing grade before the student is able to return to the program. All “IN” or “IN-F” grades must be converted to passing grades in order for the student to participate in the doctoral examination, proposal defense, or dissertation defense. When INs convert to F grades, the student will no longer be in good standing and they may need to take a leave of absence to complete the work, or be withdrawn from the program in accordance with Graduate School policies (e.g., in cases where there are two Fs).

Academic Integrity and Generative Artificial Intelligence (G-AI) Use

Academic integrity violations – see [Clark’s statement on this subject](#) – may result in an assignment or course failure or, in cases where multiple violations occur, expulsion from the Ph.D. program (see below). Such violations can, in rare cases, stem from Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects violations or the falsification/fabrication of data related to one’s research. When an alleged academic integrity violation occurs, the review process will proceed as follows:

- 1) The faculty member or instructor who claims a violation will first present their evidence to the accused student who will then be given a chance to explain the circumstances, defend themselves, and/or acknowledge that there was a violation. If the situation is resolved, the faculty member will then determine the outcome for the student (e.g., no action, a failed assignment, a warning, or a failed course).
- 2) If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved through step 1, the student can appeal the decision to the Director and Associate Director who will review the evidence presented by the faculty member or instructor, and the accused student. The Director, Associate Director, and student will meet to discuss the matter and the Director/Associate Director will then decide whether to support the faculty member/instructor’s decision or to determine that an alternative decision is warranted. The process followed and resulting decision will be documented in writing and circulated to all parties for agreement as to the facts of the case. Any disagreements that arise as to those facts will also be documented.
- 3) If the decision made in step 2 is unsatisfactory to the student, they can appeal to the Dean of Graduate studies in accordance with the guidelines for grade appeals in the Graduate School

⁵ The Registrar notifies the Department of any incompletes that have not been satisfied by the dates specified.

handbook⁶.

If a first academic integrity violation is confirmed and formally reported to the Director or Associate Director, the student may be put on probation for the remainder of their PhD studies in the GSG. Probation status means that the student has a flag on their internal record in the GSG (not transcript) indicating that an integrity violation has occurred. If a second violation occurs, the student may be withdrawn, expelled from the PhD program but only after a review by, and consent from, the Dean of Graduate Studies in accordance with established grade appeal procedures.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (G-AI) use

G-AI is now widespread and embedded in many of the apps, search engines, and software that we use on a daily basis. There are wide-ranging views on the ethics or value of its use within the academic and professional communities we work in and engage with, particularly as it relates to developing research and writing skills. As such, there is no universal policy on the subject, and it is thus essential that individual faculty make clear to their students what their policies are with respect to G-AI use. In the case of courses, the policy should be clearly stated in the syllabus and could range along the lines of some of these [examples](#). Failure to comply with the written, stated G-AI policy of instructors/faculty members may result in an academic integrity violation. If there is no written policy on G-AI (e.g. for directed studies, for which no written syllabus may be provided, or courses for which syllabi omit a G-AI policy), the student has the right to request a formal AI policy from the faculty member, which must be distributed to the entire class.

ASSESSING SATISFACTORY PROGRESS-TO-DEGREE (PTD)

For a student to maintain satisfactory progress in the program, the student needs to complete three course units per semester (with the exception of the first year, when seven units are typically taken due to the 0.5 credit GEOG338 requirement in each semester), and move through program milestones in a timely fashion as outlined in Figure 1 below. Overall, the goal is to attain six course units/year after year one's seven units; anything less is an exception, not the rule. Exceptions must be approved by the advisor, Associate Director, and the Director, in joint consultation. The approval is then given to the Department Administrator to update the department records and put in the student's file.

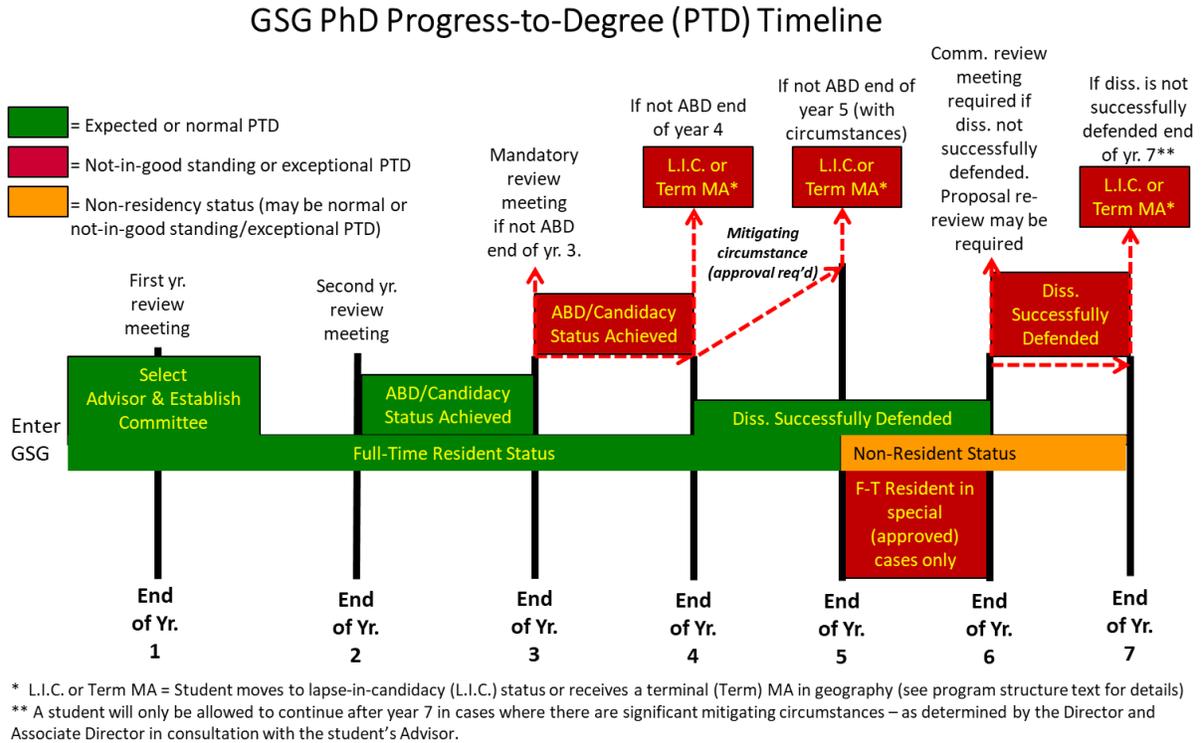
Mitigating Circumstances

The GSG takes individual circumstances into account in assessing progress. While we strive to maintain the same standards for all students, we recognize students will have different circumstances and that they will sometimes face significant personal challenges or other issues that may impede their progress. In cases of illness or family leave, for example, the GSG will address each particular situation sensitively and may find solutions that do not involve a formal leave of absence. In the case of graduate student parental leave, GSG PhD students will follow policy as outlined in the Clark University Graduate Student Handbook (under the heading *Graduate Student Parental Reassignment of Duty policy*). The impacts of sabbaticals are often uneven but can delay student progress, and we take such situations into account in our annual

⁶ Available from menu at <https://www.clarku.edu/schools/graduate-arts-and-sciences/>

reviews of progress. (See Appendix A for advisor-advisee responsibilities regarding sabbaticals.)

Figure 1. Progress to Degree Timeline



First Year

The first year of graduate study is designed to focus on seminars or other 300-level coursework to help students define/refine their interests within the context of the Clark program, as well as to progress with their professional development. The student will typically select courses in consultation with the formal first year graduate advisor, a.k.a. Associate Director, and other faculty as relevant. All entering students must complete GEOG 368 (Geographic Thought: Theories, Traditions, and Possible Futures) and GEOG 338 (Current Research in Geography – related to the Colloquium Speaker Series, 1 credit for the academic year [0.5 credit per semester])⁷. The colloquium course requires both attendance at the speaker’s (virtual or in-person) talk, and a subsequent meeting of the first-year cohort and the visitor. Additional coursework should include seminars or other 300-level courses each semester, including directed readings, directed research, skills and other courses, for a course load of 3.5 units per semester in year one. In order to maintain satisfactory progress in the graduate program, by August 1 or at the end of the first academic year, the student must obtain a minimum of seven course credits by, which includes the GEOG 338 course unit.

In addition to courses, first-year students should also be deciding on, or have decided, on a main

⁷ In cases where the colloquium course conflicts with a seminar/course a first-year student wishes to take, the student should make arrangements with both professors so that the student may attend colloquia on the days affected. If both professors agree, this arrangement can be made and the student should then register for a 0.5 Directed study with the Colloquium Course professor to ensure that they receive proper credit.

advisor or co-advising team. Main advisors provide guidance and support for the student throughout their PhD studies (see the appendix below on advising) and meet (in person or via email) with the student at registration time during each subsequent semester to plan the student's courses/program of study for the following semester. Before a formal decision is made on a main advisor, the Associate Director serves as advisor to the student. At the first-year review meeting in April/May, it is hoped that the student will have selected a main advisor or co-advisors by that time. However, in some cases, students can opt to keep the Associate Director through the third semester, if more time is needed to determine the new advisor⁸.

First-Year Review⁹:

Immediately following the end of classes in the Spring semester, a formal review of the student's first-year work and discussion of their future program (including a decision about the new advisor) will be held by a three-member *First-Year Advisory Committee*. The committee is composed of three faculty members, one of whom is either the Director or the Associate Director, and the other two members are determined during consultation between the Associate Director and the graduate student. If the student has already declared an advisor prior to the meeting, that faculty member should be one of the committee members. If the student is ready to declare a new advisor at the time of the meeting, that will be recorded on the form. Students should discuss this issue with the Associate Director before the meeting, if a new advisor has not already been selected.

About two weeks in advance of the First-Year Advisory Meeting the student should submit to each member of the committee a list of courses taken and TA/RA duties and a reflection on the experience of the first year (a copy is also given to the Department Administrator for the department and student files). The advisory meeting involves an assessment of progress made during the first year of study, and includes advising on the next year of study. In addition to its advisory role, the committee makes a recommendation to the Director and Associate Director on the continuance of the student in the graduate program. A first-year review form is filled out and signed by the committee and by the student; these forms are then given to the Department Administrator to place in the student's file.

Second Year

The second year of study should emphasize in-depth work in the student's field of interest, formulation of possible doctoral exam topics, problem formation and research, and satisfying the research skills requirement (see below). Usually, these goals are intricately linked. Coursework should include seminars, directed readings, directed research, skills and other courses, and potentially proposal writing (e.g., GEOG 314 and/or GEOG 385 with their faculty advisor(s)). By the end of this year, the student should have 1) developed a productive/collaborative working arrangement with their primary advisor or co-advisors, 2) identified the additional members who will serve on their doctoral and proposal committees (see section on PhD Advisors and Committees), 3) fulfilled their skills requirement, 4) have a good sense of what their Ph.D. project

⁸ Advisor Declaration/Change form available in the main office.

⁹ All (first-year, second-year, possible third-year) review committee meetings occur during the reading periods at the end of each spring semester. Scheduling is coordinated by the Department Administrator or Office Coordinator.

will look like, and have determined the fields that they are likely to focus on for their comprehensive doctoral exams. Second-year students should also be developing or have developed a dissertation proposal with plans for defending it in the third year if not sooner. In some cases, students may even advance to ABD or Candidacy status by the end of year two although this is not required. Second-year students are also strongly encouraged to start pursuing external sources of funding.

Second-Year Review:

Every student will have a second-year review meeting with their committee following the end of classes at the conclusion of the fourth semester. The second-year review committee will normally be comprised of full-time GSG faculty who are members of the student's doctoral examination committee. Before this meeting, the student will submit a statement summarizing courses taken, TA/RA duties fulfilled, proposed topics/fields for the PhD examination (including preliminary outlines and reading lists for each topic), and progress to date. The purpose of the second-year review is similar to that of the first-year review. Written statements of the meeting will be prepared by the committee and by the student; these statements will be reviewed by the Associate Director and given to the Department Administrator to be placed in the student's file.

Third year

The third year reflects progress to a more focused dissertation project and/or proposal. Course work during the year should deal with specific research topics, proposal writing (GEOG 314 and/or GEOG 385), doctoral exam preparation, and any degree requirements not yet completed. By the end of the third year of study, students should have completed the program requirements to be ABD/PhD Candidate by passing the doctoral examination and successfully defending and finalizing a research proposal by the end of the Spring term. In addition to completing milestones, students in Year 3 should also actively pursue external sources of funding.

Proposals are not complete until they are approved with any required revisions post-defense, and the relevant signed paperwork is on file. In order to have the proposal completed and approved by the end of the third year, it is important to defend the proposal about 45 days before the end of the term (usually about April 1 of the spring semester) given that edits may be required before final approval. If ABD or Candidacy is not attained by the end of this year, a third-year review meeting with the student's committee may be held. Continuing RA/TA funding beyond year three cannot be assured until ABD/Candidacy status is achieved given non-completion without mitigating circumstances could put the student out-of-good standing as noted in Figure 1. If the Associate Director and the student's Advisor agree that there are mitigating circumstances, an extra period of time to reach ABD/candidacy status may be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Fourth year

Students are working on dissertation research, data analysis, and writing in the fourth year. In addition to these activities, students should actively pursue external sources of funding. Coursework beyond ABD/Candidacy is usually three units per semester of research and dissertation writing credits (GEOG 317 and GEOG 394), as relevant, usually under the supervision of the advisor(s), and in some cases committee members. These units reflect continuing full-time

“residency” status focusing on dissertation research and writing. Students who were granted a milestone extension during year three will be working to complete ABD or Candidacy requirements, but these should be completed by the end of the first semester of year four unless there are approved mitigating circumstances. If by the end of the fourth year, a student has not achieved ABD/Candidacy, they will proceed to a Terminal master’s degree (details below), except in cases of significant mitigating circumstances, as determined by the student’s committee in consultation with the Associate Director and Director.

Progress beyond Fourth year

Following ABD/Candidacy status, students will work on dissertation research and writing with the expectation that they can successfully defend their dissertations before the end of the fifth year. They will normally remain in residence until the end of Year 5, though their advisor may make the case for an additional year of residence reflecting mitigating circumstances or the exceptional circumstances of the student’s research progress (for instance, extended periods of field work). This extension of residency will be approved or not by the Associate Director and Director in consultation with the student’s advisor and, potentially, the rest of the committee. Students and/or advisors may request consultation meetings with the full dissertation committee for input and review of progress once each year after year four (more if the committee agrees such meetings are necessary). Students beyond Year 4 should continue to actively pursue external funding to help support the remainder of their studies.

Students will normally defend their dissertations during Year 5 or possibly Year 6 of their degree program. For students who, by the end of Year 6, have not completed and successfully defended their dissertation, a review meeting (virtual or in person) with the student and dissertation committee will be held. The purpose of the six-year meeting is to assess mitigating circumstances and to establish a strategic plan, based on commitments on both sides (committee and student), with firm deadlines for the completion of the remaining work. A plan for completion of the dissertation must be presented by the student and approved by the committee during this meeting. This process may include reviewing the proposal, and in certain cases re-proposing and re-defending the proposal at the Advisor/committee’s discretion. Following this meeting, the student is given a maximum of one additional year to complete and defend the dissertation.

For students who, by the end of Year 7, have not completed and successfully defended their dissertation, their doctoral candidacy will lapse, at which point they will be required to take a leave-of-absence or withdraw from the program with a terminal MA degree; except in cases of significant mitigating circumstances as determined by the Associate Director and Director in consultation with the student’s advisor and committee. For reinstatement, students must make a formal petition to the GSG and Graduate School, and they may be asked to resubmit and/or redefend their dissertation proposal. The Associate Director and Director will, in consultation with the student’s advisor and committee, determine whether to accept the petition and whether a resubmission or re-defense of the proposal is necessary. The Dean of the Graduate School makes the final determination for reinstatement. Once reinstated, students must defend and submit final corrected copies of their dissertation on or before a date specified by the Associate Director and the student’s advisor (a time period that normally will not last more than

a calendar year).

MONITORING PROGRESS TO DEGREE

Faculty and Advisor Oversight

At a GSG faculty meeting during the spring semester, the Associate Director and faculty advisors, with the assistance of the Department Administrator, will present a progress report for all students in an executive session. This review assesses each student in relation to the recommended timeline and in terms of any problems, such as grades, incompletes, etc. This is in preparation for the first, second, and possible third year review meetings with students. The Department Administrator will contact faculty advisors and students as needed in advance of this meeting to obtain up-to-date information as to progress.

Progress-to-Degree Letters

Subsequent to the faculty oversight meeting and first-, second-, or third-year review meetings, the Associate Director, Director, and Department Administrator will send “progress-to-degree” (PTD) letters to each student and their advisor(s) informing them of their status, as determined from the information gathered in the faculty oversight meeting and first-, second-, or third-year review meetings. Particular emphasis is placed on assessing where the student stands in relation to completed or upcoming PTD timeline benchmarks (i.e., examinations, proposal defense, dissertation research/writing, and dissertation defense. These letters are intended to make clear to the student what the expectations are for the coming year. In doing so, they also help to set the agenda for the second and possible third-year review meetings.

Out-of-Good Standing

A student who fails to make satisfactory progress based on the timeline must meet with a committee consisting of the student’s advisor(s), any relevant (GSG) committee members (if the student has a committee) and the Associate Director. Following the faculty’s “oversight” meeting in the Spring, it is the responsibility of the Associate Director to ensure that this check-in meeting is held with the student. The committee meets with the student and makes a recommendation to the Director on the continuance of the student in the graduate program. The committee and/or the student may recommend a "grace period" during summer break or over a specified time-frame in which the student is given the opportunity (with or without a leave of absence) to meet the requirements of the program. These expectations will be specified in the Progress-to-Degree letter the student receives in late Spring. If the expectations stipulate that a particular milestone(s) (e.g., proposal or dissertation defense) will need to be completed by the end of the Fall term, the advisor and committee will again meet with the student in cases where the expected milestones have not been completed. A recommendation will then be made to the Associate Director and Director regarding the continuance of the student in the PhD program.

Withdrawal/Dismissal from the Program (“Termination”)¹⁰

One possible outcome of out-of-good standing meetings is a recommendation that the student be dismissed or withdraw from the program (a “termination”). Dismissal may include conferral of a Master’s degree, pending satisfactory completion of work recommended by the committee and agreed to by the student (such as a dissertation proposal or master’s thesis). In the case of

¹⁰ “Termination” is the term used by the Graduate School for dismissal/withdrawal.

termination, the advisor/committee are not obligated to accept work for an MA, but it is possible with mutual consent. Appeals against the department's termination decision should be addressed to the Dean of Graduate Studies, clearly stating the grounds for appeal. The Dean may choose to convene a subcommittee of the Graduate Board to consider the appeal. Minimum standards for retention of graduate students in academic programs are set by individual departments with the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Academic Grievance Procedures

Ordinarily, difficulties that may arise between students and faculty are resolved through informal discussions between the individuals involved. When a student believes that such discussions have not led to a fair outcome, the student may ask the Associate Director and Director to assess the academic grievance and potentially intervene. Again, the Associate Director, Director, relevant faculty member, and the student will attempt to resolve the issue through informal discussions. If the student considers that these methods too have failed, the student may ask the Director to convene a meeting of at least three faculty, two of whom are on the student's committee, or have worked with the student in a TA/RA context, excluding the faculty member who is the subject of the grievance. Either the Director or Associate Director shall be the third member of this committee, as long as one or both are viewed as "neutral" parties (i.e., not on the student committee or subject of the grievance). If the aggrieved student believes that one of the faculty members is biased against them, the Director will not appoint that faculty member to the Committee. Once this committee is determined, they will meet with the student and the faculty member who is subject to the academic grievance to discuss the matter. After these discussions, the committee will determine whether any and what action is required to address the grievance. Students who believe that they have not been treated fairly through such procedures may ultimately appeal the decision to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

These grievance procedures only pertain to academic matters, not grievances or conflicts related to graduate-worker assignments or supervisor-graduate worker relations governed by the graduate-worker union's collective bargaining agreement with Clark University.

PHD ADVISORS AND COMMITTEES¹¹

Advisor or Co-Advisors

A doctoral student must have an advisor in the program. Advisors must be full-time, tenure-track faculty in the GSG. For the first (maximum) 3 semesters in the program, the Associate Director may serve as the *de facto* advisor. By the end of the third semester, students should have formally determined and declared who their (co)advisor(s) will be. Once the advisor or co-advisors is/are determined, they will serve in this role for the remainder of the student's degree program unless the student decides to change them¹². In such cases, the period of transition between advisors is expected to last no longer than two months, excluding the summer month

¹¹ Faculty who are adjunct or affiliate in the GSG may be considered as either an internal (GSG faculty) member of any committee, or an external member, depending on the student's preference. Adjunct GSG faculty may not serve as Chair or Co-Chair of a PhD committee.

¹² In rare circumstances (e.g. departure from the institution or extended leave), and with the approval of the Director and Associate Director, a faculty member may stop serving as a student's advisor.

period from mid-May to mid-August (these months are not counted). In the event that the student is unable to find an advisor to work with for longer than two months, the Associate Director and Director will discuss the matter with relevant department faculty with the purpose of determining whether any faculty are able and willing to take on the advising role. Such determinations will be made in close consultation with the student to ensure that they are comfortable with the new advisor. In cases where a satisfactory reassignment cannot be made, the student will no longer be allowed to continue in the PhD program.

PhD Committees

At various stages in the program, there are different types of committees that students assemble to assist them in their progress-to-degree. The first- and second-year review committees represent faculty who have some knowledge of the progress of the student in those years, through courses or TA/RAships. There are three different types of PhD committees, which may or may not be comprised of the same set of faculty: Doctoral Examination Committee; Research Proposal Committee; and Dissertation Committee.

The ***Doctoral Examination Committee*** is composed of a minimum of three faculty members from the Graduate School of Geography. A fourth, external (i.e., non-GSG) member may also participate on this committee. The chair of the committee (in cases of co-advising, at least one of the co-advisors) is always a full-time member of the Graduate School of Geography and is the advisor. Committee members must be approved by the Associate Director at least two months prior to the Doctoral Examination.

The ***Dissertation Research Proposal Committee*** consists of a minimum of four faculty members, at least three of whom are full-time faculty members in the Graduate School of Geography, and at least one of whom is an external (non-GSG) member. The chair of the committee (in cases of co-advising, at least one of the co-advisors) is always a full-time member of the Graduate School of Geography and is the advisor. The Associate Director must approve all dissertation research proposal committees.

The ***Dissertation Committee*** consists of at least four faculty members (up to a maximum of five), three of whom are full-time members of the Graduate School of Geography, and at least one of whom is external (non-GSG). This is typically made up of the same individuals on the proposal committee. The chair of the committee (in cases of co-advising, at least one of the co-advisors) is always a full-time member of the Graduate School of Geography and is the advisor. The Associate Director must approve all dissertation committees. The chair of the committee may, after approval from the Associate Director, and in consultation/approval with/from the graduate student, change the make-up of the dissertation committee.

Convening Committees

Committee meetings for doctoral examinations, doctoral dissertation research proposal defenses, and dissertation defenses should take place during the regular academic year (i.e., Fall and Spring semesters, through the end of the examination period). In cases where the student wishes to schedule a milestone outside of the semester, prior approval must be given by the committee and the Advisor.

The doctoral (orals) exam, proposal defense and dissertation defense should normally be

convened as an in-person meeting with the student, the chair of the committee and two additional committee members who are from the Graduate School of Geography in the room. External committee members (typically not based locally) may participate in the exams or defense via video conferencing (e.g., Zoom) or asynchronously by submitting questions, comments, and recommendations (e.g., to approve or not) in writing in advance of the exam or defense with the approval of the advisor. In some cases, students and/or committee members may not be able to participate in person and the exam or defense will be held virtually with approval from the advisor and committee. Such circumstances may be caused by unanticipated emergencies, international sabbaticals, dangerous weather conditions, injury, sickness, visa/immigration issues, or the student residing outside of the USA. Other options (e.g., written questions, feedback, and recommendations) might also be permitted if approved by the Advisor and committee. Deviations should be avoided if at all possible, invoked only when no alternatives are available and an undue delay in progress-to-degree would be incurred.

Changes to the Committee

Once a student has created a PhD committee, that committee is usually the same for the doctoral examination, proposal defense, and dissertation defense. From time-to-time, however, students may decide to change the composition of their PhD committees. It is acceptable and permissible for students to change committee membership as long as the committee conforms to the above requirements. It is incumbent on faculty to recognize that changes may occur, and that these should be supported. It is also incumbent on students to inform faculty in a timely manner of desired committee changes, and to recognize that faculty participation on PhD committees is a time/labor commitment that faculty take seriously. When changes occur, it may be a disappointment on both sides, but it is a professional decision and process. To that end, students are required to complete a Change of Committee form so that faculty members are always informed of their responsibilities as committee members.

Guidelines for External Committee Members

External committee members serving on a proposal defense, doctoral examination, or dissertation committee are expected to have a PhD. In cases where a student is seeking an external committee member without a PhD, the student/advisor must bring the case to the Associate Director and/or Director for consideration.

DOCTORAL EXAMINATION

The doctoral examination assesses the competency of graduate students in one major and two minor fields. Listed below are examples of potential major and first minor exam fields. Competency in a subfield is defined as an understanding of the substantive content and range of theoretical, methodological, and/or analytical approaches. Students must be able to critique alternative research traditions and defend the theoretical frameworks, methods, and/or analytical techniques they adopt. For the exam in the major field the student will be expected to have an in-depth knowledge of the entire field. In the field selected for the first minor, the student will be expected to have mastered a survey of the field. The topic of the second minor will be more narrowly defined and the student will be expected to have an in-depth knowledge of it. The dissertation proposal is not an eligible field for the PhD exam, although the research

context from which the proposal is drawn can be used as a field.

At least two months prior to the doctoral examination, each student is required to submit to the doctoral examination committee a topical outline (about one page) and reading list for each of the proposed fields for the doctoral examination. Reading lists should be comprised of no more than 75-100 references for the major field, and no more than 50-75 references for each of the minor fields, although the committee and student may determine that shorter lists are appropriate (e.g., for fields that include long monographs). These items must be submitted during the regular semester. A copy of the approved reading lists should be signed (approval by email is fine) by the committee and submitted to the Department Administrator to be kept in the student's file. Announcement of the doctoral examination is sent via email as a GSG Memo to faculty and all PhD students two weeks before the scheduled examination date, upon approval of the chairperson of the examination committee.

The doctoral examination takes place sometime between the fourth semester in residence and the end of the sixth semester, during the regular academic year (i.e., from the first day of classes through to the end of the examination period) unless prior approval has been granted by the committee and the Advisor. The dissertation proposal may be defended before or after the doctoral examination, and both should be done by the end of the sixth semester, unless otherwise approved by the advisor.

Students can choose to have their doctoral examination be an **oral-only** exam, or a **written-oral** exam. Each student is required to inform their advisor, committee, and the Department Administrator of the chosen exam format upon submission of the exam reading lists, or, at least one month before the exam date. When the student chooses an **oral-only exam**, the question/answer session on the major field will last approximately one and a quarter hour, followed by about a five to ten-minute break. With the prior approval of their advisor, the student may propose to begin the exam session by providing a brief discussion that relates to key questions and concepts associated with their major field. The sessions on each minor field will then be about 40 minutes each, followed by additional time (about 10-15 minutes) at the end for committee deliberation and feedback to the student. This typically results in a total of a three-hour time block scheduled for the exam. Students may bring water/coffee, etc. but only for their own consumption. During the committee's deliberation, the student will leave the room until they are called back for the outcome and feedback. After all discussions end, the committee will make a recommendation – either a pass, a conditional pass (specifying additional work that needs to be completed to pass), or an unsatisfactory. The advisor/student will complete a Record of Examination form (provided ahead of the exam by the Department Administrator or Office Coordinator), have it signed where necessary by the committee and student, and then submit the form to the Department Administrator to keep on file.

Students who choose a **written-oral** exam must have the written component focus on all three fields. The written component will always precede the oral exam. Given this additional work, the oral exam will subsequently be shorter: about 40 minutes for the major field and 20 minutes for each minor field. Members of the committee shall prepare written questions for each field that the student takes as a written exam. The number of questions to be answered can be

singular (i.e., one required) or multiple (i.e., 1-2 or a student's choice from a selection of multiple questions) depending on the advisor's and committee's preferences. The advisor(s) will curate and send these questions to the Department Administrator. At the beginning of a pre-determined **nine-hour period** (including 1 hour for lunch, meaning 8 hours of allotted exam time) for each field that the student will be writing on, the Department Administrator will communicate to the student a selection of original questions posed by the committee that the student completes in a "take-home" setting. The answers shall not exceed 2500 words per field. The scope and number of questions shall be limited by this constraint. Students for whom English is not their native tongue may ask for (and should be granted) more time, specifics to be determined mutually by the student and their advisor. The written component shall be completed two weeks before the scheduled oral exam, over a period of up to four weeks. Whether the student takes a written component does not influence the questions that the committee can ask during the oral component of the examination.

Evaluating the Doctoral Examination

The written-oral or orals-only exam will be graded as one of the following at the conclusion of the orals portion of the exam: Pass, Conditional Pass, or Unsatisfactory. A conditional pass will require additional work by the student to get a pass, the specifics to be determined by the advisor and committee members in consultation with the student. An unsatisfactory grade may require, at the committee's discretion, an additional written exam for a (or all) field(s), or the re-taking of the oral exam. **A second grade of unsatisfactory results in failing the PhD examination and dismissal from the PhD program.** Any student who receives a failing grade will, however, become eligible for a terminal Master's degree on completion of additional, agreed to work, the content and structure of which are to be defined by the committee.

Examples of Major and First Minor Doctoral Examination Fields¹³

- Agrarian Studies
- Biogeography
- Climate Change Science
- Development Geography
- Economic Geography
- Energy Geographies
- Environmental Geography
- Financial Geographies
- Forest Ecology
- GIS and Remote Sensing
- Human-Environment Relations
- Labor Geography
- Land Use/Land-Cover Change

¹³ This list of fields is to be used as a general guide to defining major and first minor orals exam topics. While external committee members are not required for the doctoral exams, topics outside of the expertise of GSG faculty may require external committee members be involved in the development of exam reading lists and questions for the doctoral examination. Students should rely on the advice of their advisors in making this determination.

- Mobility studies
- Nature and Society
- Place Theory
- Political Ecology
- Political Economy
- Science and Technology Studies
- Social and Political theory
- Sustainability Transitions
- Urban Geography

DISSERTATION RESEARCH PROPOSAL

A formal research proposal for dissertation work, which normally should not exceed a maximum of 10-15 pages (single-spaced), must be completed and approved by the student's dissertation committee. Appendices and references do count toward the page limit.

1. The research proposal should be defended and final with revisions submitted by the end of year three, unless there are mitigating circumstances that have been approved by the Advisor, Committee, and Associate Director (see “mitigating circumstances”). Any student who is not a Candidate/ABD by the end of year three is no longer in good standing and may face loss of stipend until Candidacy/ABD status is achieved (see Figure 1).
2. Final proposal drafts must be approved by the student’s advisor and submitted to all members of the dissertation committee no later than two weeks before the scheduled date of the proposal defense. An abstract of the proposal must be approved by the advisor and submitted to the Department Administrator at least two weeks before the scheduled date of the proposal defense. This abstract will be circulated to all faculty members along with the GSG Memo announcing the defense date.
3. The proposed defense can be held any time during the academic year (Fall, Spring semesters, barring school vacation/university holiday). However, the proposal defense should not be held so late in the academic year that revisions will inevitably require oversight of the advisor and/or committee members during the summer months, particularly in cases where a student’s timely Progress-to-Degree hinges upon proposal approval. Defenses may only be held during the months of June, July, and August (prior to the start of classes) if unanimous consent of the committee and Advisor is given. In accordance with the convening rules noted above, the defense should be held in person with all GSG faculty members on the committee physically present unless there are mitigating circumstances. External members of the committee will often only be able to attend via video-conferencing, although they are most welcome to be physically present. In some (approved by the advisor) cases, given time-zone differences and other complications, external members may submit comments and questions to the student’s advisor in advance of the dissertation defense, in lieu of attending in real time.
4. The proposal defense is typically scheduled for a total of one-and-a-half (1.5) to two (2) hours, allowing time for the student to briefly present their proposal to the committee and to ensure that there is sufficient time for questions, discussion, decision, and feedback. The student

typically prepares a PowerPoint presentation, however this may be subject to the advisor's preferences for the proposal defense format. Other CUGS members, friends, and family may attend the proposal presentation at the beginning of the defense but will then need to leave so the committee can proceed with its questions and discussions with the student.

5. The dissertation research proposal should be a concise, focused document. One good model is the NSF dissertation grant proposal document which focuses on a concise statement of theory, original contribution of the research, previous findings, methodology and the research plan. This will also facilitate the development of grant proposals to NSF and other groups/organizations.

Title Page – Proposed title of dissertation; name of student; names of advisor and committee members; date of submission; a 250-word abstract stating concisely the nature of the problem to be pursued, objectives of the study, and data and methods to be employed.

Introduction – An overview and statement of the researchable issue, research questions, and methods associated with the proposed project, including its relationship to past and present research.

Literature Review – Discussion of the pertinent literature, placing the proposal in context, and identifying gaps in established understandings of the phenomenon in question.

Conceptual Framework (as needed) – Presentation of a novel conceptualization of the drivers and/or mechanisms behind the phenomenon in question.

Methods – Discussion of the research objectives and design, and the data to be employed.

Timetable – A rough timetable for the research, analysis, and writing phases.

Reference List – Works which most clearly relate to the study as sources of theory, data, or methodology should be cited. While the reference list should reflect a thorough awareness of the literature, it need not be all-inclusive.

A final research proposal must be approved by all committee members. Once final edits (if needed) are made and approved by the advisor and committee, the student submits a clean copy of the proposal to the Department Administrator who then forwards the abstract to the faculty and places a copy in the Geography main office for a two-week display/review period. At the end of that period, if no objections have been raised to the Advisor, formal approval is granted. If objections are raised, the committee and the student will assess the case and determine what alterations to the proposal, if any, are needed. Once approved, the proposal has a three-year validity period. If the dissertation is not completed by the end of three years after approval of the dissertation research proposal, the research proposal may be required to be resubmitted for Advisor and committee re-review and re-approval.

DISSERTATION DEFENSE/WORKING SESSION AND PRESENTATION

The dissertation defense or “working session” is the final stage of a student's journey through the PhD program. The defense/session offers a chance for the student to present their entire dissertation project and for the committee to ask questions and provide feedback on the dissertation document. The goal is to determine whether the dissertation is generally acceptable

for the granting of a PhD degree, and whether and what further edits are needed to finalize the work. The defense process is outlined below.

1. A complete draft of the dissertation (an electronic version of all chapters, figures, tables and bibliography) is circulated to the dissertation committee for a formal defense or working session. This “defensible draft” should have already been subjected to extensive feedback and re-working, particularly from the student’s advisor. With the approval of the Advisor, the student forwards copies of an abstract of the dissertation to the Department Administrator for distribution to the entire faculty one month before the defense/working session. The student must provide a copy of the defensible draft to all members of the dissertation committee at least one month before the defense/working session. Also, in preparation for the defense/working session, one copy of the defensible draft should be placed for faculty review in the geography office for a two-week period in advance of the working session. The defensible draft put on display in the department must be complete in terms of including all chapters and bibliography.
2. Dissertation defense/working sessions will be held during the regular academic year (Fall and Spring term), unless special accommodations have been made and approved by the advisor and committee. The defense will typically be held in person with the student and all GSG faculty members on the committee physically present unless there are mitigating circumstances as outlined above in the section on “Convening Committees”. External members of the committee will often only be able to attend virtually via video-conferencing, although they are most welcome to be physically present if possible. In some (approved by the advisor) cases, given time-zone differences and other complications, external members may submit comments and questions to the student’s advisor in advance of the dissertation defense, in lieu of attending in real time.
3. The defense/working session will last between one-and-a-half (1.5) to two (2) hours. The student will begin the session with a brief (20minutes or so) presentation of the dissertation to the committee and guests/other CUGS members. Once the presentation has concluded, following a brief period to allow non-committee audience members to ask questions, guests/others will be asked to leave so that the committee can raise questions, provide feedback, and participate in a discussion with the student.
4. At the conclusion of this discussion, the student will be asked to leave the room so the committee can deliberate and make a decision. There are three possible decision outcomes: 1) Approved with no conditions; 2) Approved with conditions that are specified on the Defense/Working Session record; or 3) Not Approved (meaning that significant revisions are required and that another defense or working session will need to be convened at a later date). The Defense/Working Session record form will document this decision, include specifics on any conditions that need to be met and when these are due by, and will be signed by all committee members and the student before it is filed by the Department Administrator.
5. If approved with no conditions, or once any outstanding conditions have been satisfactorily met by the student and approved by the Advisor and/or committee, a final (hard copy) version of the dissertation, one that is properly formatted in accordance with University

guidelines (see the [dissertation template guide](#)), and signed by all committee members, is then placed on display in the Geography main office for two weeks. See Appendix B 'Timetable to Commencement and other Relevant Deadlines' for information about timelines and due dates for graduation/degree completion.

6. After the two weeks of display, the dissertation is then formally accepted by the dissertation committee and department if no objections are raised by GSG faculty. The student will obtain signatures from the committee members and an electronic copy of the dissertation then goes to the Graduate School for final review before being uploaded to ProQuest ETD. Once this is completed, the student will deliver the following copies:
 - a. One bound copy to the Graduate School of Geography
 - b. One electronic copy to the Graduate School – referred to as the “library copy”
 - c. Any number of personal copies requested by the student. This number may include copies for the student’s committee members¹⁴.

DISSERTATION TYPES

Two different types of dissertation may be prepared and defended: the Dissertation monograph (DM) or the Three Article Dissertation (TAD).

Dissertation Monograph (DM)

1. The DM constitutes the “classical” dissertation form in which the topic of the dissertation is treated in monograph form, composed of a series of chapters that lay out the research problem or synthesis theme, review the relevant literature, detail the data or evidence and the mode of analysis employed, and provide conclusion and significance statements as well as a bibliography. Appendixes, prefaces, and acknowledgements may be appropriate and included as well.
2. The dissertation monograph is completed when successfully defended and approved by dissertation committee as described above.

Three-Article Dissertation (TAD)

1. The TAD constitutes a *dissertation volume* composed of (i) an introductory chapter addressing the general problem in which the three articles are encapsulated, (ii) at least three stand-alone articles (SAA) related to a coherent research problem, and (iii) a summary/conclusion chapter that sets the overall contribution of the research in context.
 - a. The introductory chapter (i) establishes the broader problem or topic of study and how the three SAAs fit within it, and (ii) provides the relevant literature review and discussion of methods employed in the dissertation research and how these relate to specific SAAs. Any methodological or research design related challenges can be discussed as well.
 - b. The SAAs constitute original research, review, or conceptual-philosophical

¹⁴ The student is fully responsible for all costs associated with ProQuest ETD and the binding of copies of the dissertation. Students will, however, be reimbursed for the costs of binding for the departmental copy.

contributions to geographical or geographical-related scholarship.

- c. The concluding chapter summarizes-reviews the findings of the SAAs and specifies the contributions that each article and the three-article set make to science/knowledge more broadly, the specific dissertation problem/topic, and relevant discipline(s)/field(s). The conclusion could also offer some reflection on the experience of completing the dissertation – e.g., challenges, broader lessons learned – and ideas regarding next steps (scholarly/professionally that can build off the project).
2. The entire dissertation is initially and primarily written by the doctoral candidate regardless of the subsequent revisions and authorship of the articles submitted for publication.
3. All chapters must contain individual bibliographies. The formatting of dissertation must be consistent with the dissertation submission rules of Clark University (as it will need to be for final acceptance by the Graduate School).
4. Each chapter of the dissertation must contain the requisite tables, graphics, and bibliography, regardless of redundancy that may appear owing to the 3-article format.
5. The dissertation may have prefaces/acknowledgements, appendixes, and other complementary sections as needed.
6. The dissertation is completed when successfully defended and approved by the dissertation committee as described above. It is understood that this approval asserts that the three articles are of sufficient quality that they are ready for submission to peer-reviewed journals.

The Stand Alone Articles (SAA)

1. Each SAA is a complete and publishable research contribution or review unto itself following the content and length of a “research article” as defined by major journals (i.e., those journals reviewed by the Social Science Citation Index, the Science Citation Index or the Arts and Humanities Citation Index).
2. None of the three articles can be published in any other dissertation. The articles may have already been published or in-press by then time of the dissertation defense, as long as they are a substantive part of the research proposal that was defended and approved by the School.
3. It is expected that each article will be submitted for consideration of publication (either prior or subsequent to the completion of the dissertation) to a major journal consistent with the relevant research discipline, subfield, or interdisciplinary area.
4. Authorship of the articles in their submitted form must include the dissertation author as the lead author of any multiple authored submissions. In the dissertation, each SAA will carry a footnote describing if that contribution is to be submitted as single or multiple authored manuscript and to which journal or other outlet it is expected to be submitted.

MASTER OF ARTS (M.A.)

For PhD students matriculated in the Graduate School of Geography the expectation is that they will complete a doctoral degree in the program. However, two types of M.A. degrees are

available to them: a pre-doctoral (en-route to PhD) and Terminal M.A. See the Progress-to-Degree timeline (Figure 1, above), which highlights when the Terminal M.A. would be a relevant option for students.

Pre-Doctoral M.A. (En-route to PhD)

An M.A. degree in Geography can be awarded to doctoral candidates (ABD status) who do not already have a master's degree in geography (M.A. or M.S.) after fulfilling the following requirements:

1. Completion of required course work (GEOG 368, 338, and two skills courses);
2. Completion (passing) of the doctoral examination; and
3. Successful defense and approval of the dissertation research proposal.

A student opting for the pre-doctoral M.A. must request it at the time of achieving ABD status.

Terminal¹⁵ M.A.

Terminal M.A. degrees may also be granted when students decide to leave the program or in cases when they have not made satisfactory progress and are dismissed/withdrawn from the program. Conditions under which this may occur, and pertaining to the granting of such degrees, are outlined in the section above on "Withdrawal/Dismissal from the Program".

STIPEND ALLOCATION PRINCIPLES

We commit to, with matriculation in the PhD program, compensating all geography PhD students employed as RAs or TAs for four (4) academic years (AYs) or eight (8) semesters. Compensation rates and worker benefits are governed by the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between Clark University and the Teamsters, not the GSG. See [Graduate Union for Students - Student Employment](#) for details.

These four (4) AYs or eight (8) semesters can be funded by the University, from general/endowed funds in the GSG accounts, or through faculty member research grants, the Center for Geospatial Analytics (CGA), start-up funds, *Economic Geography (EG)*, and other accounts (e.g., those associated with endowed chairs) when possible. The four (4) AYs or eight (8) semesters is a commitment to each student we admit, not a guarantee or a contract. Our ability to fund students is dependent on the financial support we receive from the University administration, our endowments, and the receipt of research and other grants or gifts. Students beyond their 8 semesters of stipends should expect to support themselves when in residence, such as through externally secured grants or fellowships. Any additional departmental funding beyond a student's four (4) AYs or eight (8) semesters of committed funding is typically determined by individual faculty members with grants or other funding sources that they (individual faculty members) can use at their discretion, and not determined by the GSG Director or Department Administrator.

Progress-to-Degree letters include information for continuing students regarding how many semesters of funding they have received and how many of the eight (8) semesters remain. We

¹⁵ The University terms the M.A. that is not en-route to the PhD, a "terminal" M.A. It means simply that the student leaves the program with the M.A. degree in Geography, rather than continuing in the program to PhD completion.

ask that students reach out to the GSG Director and Department Administrator immediately if they think there is a discrepancy with regard to the number of semesters used or remaining.

APPENDICES TO THE PhD PROGRAM HANDBOOK

APPENDIX A: ADVISING

The PhD Program Structure document outlines the course of graduate studies from a student's entry into the program until the completion of the program. It spells out the formal requirements that have to be met by a student in order to obtain a doctorate in Geography from Clark University. One final aspect of graduate studies – advising-- however, needs further clarification beyond its outline in the program structure. The following interpretation, composed by CUGS, amended and approved by the faculty, is therefore appended.

Faculty and graduate students (subsequently referred to as 'we') acknowledge that the advising relationship is a crucial aspect of the experience of graduate studies as a whole. We believe that this relationship is entirely mutual yet difficult to define and prescribe precisely. We nevertheless deem it possible to agree on a number of basic principles pertaining to the advisor-advisee relationship in order to ensure the success of this relationship and the advisee's path toward the PhD.

By **advisor** we generally mean all members of a graduate student's first-year review, second-year review, doctoral examination, proposal defense, and/or dissertation committee(s) and on the broader level, the Director of the Graduate School and the Head of the Graduate Studies Committee. These committees may, but need not, consist of the same faculty members. Usually, the committee consists of a main advisor and several additional advisors.

The **main advisor or co-advisors** play(s) a significantly more important role in the student's graduate school career. So while all of the below is applicable to all advisor-advisee interactions, the relationship between the main advisor(s) and the student is more invested, more committed, requires more time and more frequent contact, and a higher level of intensity in the cooperation.

By **advisee**, we mean any graduate student formally matriculated in the PhD program.

By **advising**, we mean the exchange from advisor to advisee in which the advisor offers timely advice, feedback, and opinions to the advisee regarding any aspect pertinent to the successful completion of the requirements toward the PhD, and the advisee's launching of a career in their envisioned field.

The nature of this exchange, and the aspects considered pertinent to successful completion of the program -- while guided by the advisor's academic expertise and experience with advising -- are determined in mutual agreement between advisor and advisee in order to best meet the specific needs of the advisee.

We (the department) agree to the following *basic principles* underlying the advisor-advisee relationship:

1. **The advisee/advisor relationship is a relationship based on mutual consent**, subject to approval by the School's director. Each faculty member and student should respect each other's autonomy in working with advisors and advisees of their choice.
2. The **most important aspect of the advisor-advisee relationship is mutual respect**; by the graduate student for the faculty's many other duties and commitments to other students, the

School, the University, and outside the University, and by the faculty for the student's need for advising, and their other duties and pressures from other classes, departmental and outside commitments.

3. From this mutual respect for each other follows that expectations by one of the other must be matched by a commitment to honor each other's constraints and abilities. Specifically:

Advisor Responsibilities

- Committee members **take on a serious commitment** to work with a student through the completion of a given phase of the PhD process. Reasonable time should be given to advisees to carefully prepare for the completion of each one of the phases. Advisors **should work congenially and effectively with the advisee's other committee members** with the advisee's best interest in mind.
- Advisors should be **accessible**, i.e. advisees need to feel that they can make appointments with their advisors, that these appointments will be kept to the best of an advisor's ability, and that advisees, especially commuters, are informed as early as possible if cancellation of an appointment is unavoidable.
- Advisors should **make their general availability known** to the advisee (office hours, additional times, "good" and "bad" days, etc.)
- **Sabbaticals** have a particular, unique impact on advisor-advisee communication and contact, and can negatively affect a student's progress-to-degree. When faculty members apply for sabbaticals, and their applications are considered by the Director and Provost, the potential consequences to their students must be considered and planned for such that students stay on track. As such, applications for sabbaticals must include plans concerning the professor's doctoral students, especially concerning the three milestones: doctoral examination, proposal defense and dissertation defense. Professors should plan to be on campus for such milestones, or commit to being available via video conferencing to prevent progress delays.
- Advisors should be **responsive** to advisees' initiation of meetings, the issues and concerns brought up by the advisee, and the advisee's specific needs. They should act as a sounding board, and give as specific feedback as possible in as timely a fashion as possible. Advisors should grant the advisee focused attention during the meeting.
- Advisors should **make their expectations** of the student **known explicitly**. They should also give the student an idea about when they can expect a turn-around of submitted work. Turnaround work times ought to be reasonable in light of the type of work submitted.
- Advisors should **be aware that different students have different needs** in terms of frequency, amount of time, and content of advising; different capabilities and working habits. This acceptance needs to be balanced with **concrete help** to improve the capabilities and habits as needed.
- Advisors should **encourage advisees to collaborate with others** and to **develop contacts** outside the Graduate School of Geography. They should advise students on how to **build networks** and to develop the kind of professionalism that will be needed later in our academic

careers.

Advisors should be **supportive of the advisee's initiative to define topics**, attend conferences, etc., that are in the student's best interest.

Advisee Responsibilities

- Advisees should **not expect one advisor to meet all their advising needs**. The advisee should strive to choose the members of their committee such that most if not all of their needs are met within the faculty pool of the advisee's committee(s). Having solicited advice, advisees should conscientiously attempt to implement those measures mutually agreed upon.
- Advisees should **seek out their advisors, initiate meetings**, keep appointments, and inform their advisors as early as possible if the appointment cannot be kept.
- Advisees should **be punctual** for appointments, and **respect the time constraints of the advisor**. If the meeting involves a review of any documents associated with the advisee's dissertation, coursework, or research, those should be sent to the advisor at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance of the meeting so that the advisor has sufficient time to review them.
- Advisees should recognize the advisor's time as valuable and thus **come well prepared** into the meeting. This means to have prepared the issues to be discussed and the questions to be asked.
- **Sabbaticals** have a particular, unique impact on advisor-advisee communication and contact, and can negatively affect a student's progress-to-degree. Advisees should develop a plan with their advisors before sabbaticals to ensure timely progress and means of communication during these leaves.
- Advisees should be clear about **making their needs known**; they should give the advisor a clear idea of when they will hand in required information, what external deadlines they must meet, and with what problems they most need assistance.
- Advisees ought to **assess their own needs, capabilities, and progress as honestly as possible** in order to ask for, and obtain, the most appropriate advising.
- Advisees should **initiate contacts**, or respond openly to the opportunity to **develop outside contacts**, and actively seek to establish and maintain support and information networks.
- Advisees should **initiate the search for funding, internships, conferences to attend**, and research to explore.

APPENDIX B: TIMETABLE TO COMMENCEMENT AND OTHER RELEVANT DEADLINES¹⁶:

Exact dates are set by the Graduate School, please [consult their webpage for current information](#):

May Degree/Commencement

December – Early February: APPLICATION FOR DEGREE must be filled out and submitted online (exact dates may vary year to year – details are circulated by the Registrar’s Office each semester).

February 1: Final date for submitting defensible draft to members of the dissertation committee and one copy of the abstract to the Administrator of Degree Programs.

March 15: Final date for one copy of the defensible drafts to be placed for faculty review in the geography office. (Display copy two weeks prior to defense date)

April 1: Final date for working sessions/defenses – all working sessions/defenses must take place on, or before, this date.

May 1: Presentation quality copy of the dissertation¹⁷, including preliminary pages with one official title page, an academic history and an abstract (properly formatted in accordance with University guidelines) must be submitted to the Graduate School for final approval via ProQuest ETD, as well as submitted to the advisor/s and the Administrator of Degree Programs, for degree completion.

May 22: Degree conferred – Commencement (Date changes yearly, usually the third Monday in May)

Deadlines for the two other possible dates for receiving a PhD are as follows:

August Degree

*****Summer milestone completion is contingent upon advisor/committee approval*****

Mid-February – Late May: APPLICATION FOR DEGREE must be filled out and submitted online (exact dates may vary year to year – details are circulated by the Registrar’s Office each semester).

***Petition to Walk at May Commencement** must be filed in Early March, with a defense date of Late April*

June 1: Final date for submitting defensible draft to members of the dissertation committee and one copy of the abstract to the Administrator of Degree Programs.

June 15: Final date for one copy of the defensible drafts to be placed for faculty review in the geography office. (Display copy, two weeks prior to the defense date).

July 1: Final date for working sessions/defenses – all working sessions/defenses must take place on, or before, this date.

August 1: Presentation quality copy of the dissertation, including preliminary pages with one official title page, an academic history and an abstract (properly formatted in accordance with

¹⁶ Precise dates will change each year depending on date for Board of Trustees meetings.

¹⁷ Note that “presentation quality” means the final copy is ready to be printed and bound.

University guidelines) must be submitted to the Graduate School for final approval via ProQuest ETD, as well as submitted to the advisor/s and the Administrator of Degree Programs, for degree completion.

August 30/31: Degree conferred.

December Degree

Late May – Late September: APPLICATION FOR DEGREE must be filled out and submitted online (exact dates may vary year to year – details are circulated by the Registrar’s Office each semester).

September 15: Final date for submitting copies of defensible drafts to members of the dissertation committee and copies of the abstract to the Administrator of Degree Programs.

October 15: Final date for one copy of the defensible drafts to be placed for faculty review in the geography office. (Display copy, two weeks prior to the defense date).

November 1: Final date for working sessions/defenses – all working sessions/defenses must take place on, or before, this date.

December 1: Presentation quality copy of the dissertation¹⁸, including preliminary pages with one official title page, an academic history and an abstract (properly formatted in accordance with University guidelines) must be submitted to the Graduate School for final approval via ProQuest ETD, as well as submitted to the advisor/s and the Administrator of Degree Programs, for degree completion.

December 30/31: Degree conferred.

¹⁸ Note that “presentation quality” means the final copy is ready to be printed and bound.