



Faculty of Engineering

Guide for Graduate Coordinators

September 1, 2021

The Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) describes the general duties of graduate coordinators (GCs) [here](#). A more detailed breakdown of the responsibilities, divided into general categories, is given below. The Faculty of Engineering [Graduate Studies Handbook](#) is also a valuable reference. This guidebook is intended to assist GCs in performing their duties when managing the graduate programs within the departments. It is understood that different departments within the Faculty of Engineering may have their own operational procedures which should be taken into account when performing tasks related to managing the graduate program. Also note that the Internetworking MEng Program is a coursework degree and is distinct from the other graduate programs in the Faculty of Engineering; thus, this document will have little relevance for its graduate program. Similarly, the Biomedical Engineering graduate programs, while research based, incorporate aspects of the Faculty of Medicine programing into degree requirements, making this document only partially applicable.

1) Establishing and monitoring student programs

New graduate students must submit information on program requirements (within the first month) and committee composition (within 8 months of start). Faculty of Engineering forms are available to capture the required information and can be found on the GSC Brightspace Page. GCs should inform students that changes to their program requirements must be documented in the Graduate Studies Information System (GSIS) using the Program Update form. FGS uses this information to audit the student's file before graduation to confirm that requirements were met. Graduate students must also be reminded to remain registered in their programs by enrolling every term in REGN 9999 and one other course, often the graduate seminar.

Requirements for Committee Composition for Thesis-Based Students:

- 1) Committees normally consist of a supervisor from the department, another member from the department and a third member who is external to the student's department.
- 2) Committee members must all be FGS members (Adjunct or Full) (<https://www.dal.ca/faculty/gradstudies/faculty/membership.html>).
- 3) At least half of the committee must be full-time Dal faculty (not adjunct). In practice, this would normally mean that two of the three committee members must be regular faculty.
- 4) Committees with supervisors external to the department but from within Dalhousie must have at least one (and preferably two) committee members from within the department.
- 5) Supervisors external to the department but within Dalhousie must be cross-listed with FGS.
- 6) Only full-time Dalhousie faculty and Adjuncts (Retired) may be sole supervisors of graduate students. Supervisors external to Dalhousie must have adjunct status within the department and can only co-supervise. Students in this situation must have another co-supervisor from

Dalhousie/Department. GCs should ensure that any student in this situation is aware of the Residency Rules (FGS for PhD and Faculty of Engineering for MASc/MSc).

7) Adjunct (Retired) may be the sole-supervisor of graduate students.

Consult Section 9.1 in the Graduate Calendar for more limitations regarding the participation of Adjunct (Scholar) Postdoctoral Researchers in supervisory committees.

Auditing Student Files

Once a year, GCs (or Graduate Secretaries) should check each student's file in GSIS to ensure that the student's program requirements are up-to-date and agree with courses taken, and that a progress report has been filed. The progress report should describe at least an annual committee meeting. If not, the GC should inform the student and supervisor that a committee meeting is necessary. GCs should flag any files where the supervisor does not report **at least a 3/5 for progress** and follow-up with the supervisor to identify potential issues. GCs should also check to determine if comprehensive exams have been completed or are planned for PhD students.

Advanced Placement/Transfer Credits

Both of these processes can be used to reduce the number of classes required for a student's program, and applications with appropriate forms should be submitted to FGS within the student's first term. The total number of credits applied from both processes cannot exceed 6 credit hours; for most thesis-based students, that means that their course requirements can be reduced from 4 to 2 with this. Note that the total number of credits completed outside Dalhousie and counted for advanced placement or transfer credit cannot exceed 33% of the total required credits. [Advanced Placement](#) applies to graduate courses taken within another degree that has been completed. It is handled within FGS and, while FGS states in the form that it is not automatic, it is rarely declined, particularly when courses from a previous degree taken at Dalhousie are being considered. The form includes a clear checklist for the GC before signing off (mostly confirming courses and grades and ensuring a syllabus is included). The GC should also check that a minimum of a B grade was attained in any course considered. An official transcript may be required if courses were completed at another institution.

[Transfer credit](#) applies to courses taken at another institution that were not counted towards a degree. It follows the regular procedure for undergraduate classes, with the Registrar having final sign-off. It requires an official transcript from the other institution. Proof that either the other degree was not granted or the courses were not counted towards it is helpful.

Comprehensive Exams

The exams must be completed within two years of the start of the program for direct entry students. For students who transfer from the MASc/MSc program to the PhD program, the

exams must be completed within four terms of the transfer. GCs should monitor the timeline, and students' place on it, in the annual audit of graduate student progress.

GCs should remind supervisors that they must notify both the department and student when assigning topics and dates of exams. Since all courses must be completed before writing comprehensive exams, the GC must be aware that exams are taking place so they can ensure that program requirements have been met.

The outcome of the comprehensive exam is conveyed to the Department using Engineering's PhD Comprehensive Examination Result form. The GC then officially informs the student in writing of the results and submits a grade change form to modify the student's transcript.

If comprehensive exams are not completed within the appropriate timeline, the GC will meet with the supervisor and student to determine the reasons for the delay. The supervisor and student will write separate letters to the Faculty of Engineering's Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) to explain the situation and offer a timely plan for completion. The GC will bring the issue to the GSC, and the committee will decide on an appropriate path forward or recommend dismissal.

Directed Reading/Study and Special Topics Classes

Three weeks before the start of a term, GCs should remind all faculty to inform the Graduate Secretary of their intention to offer a directed studies class by having at least one enrolled student submit the Directed Reading/Study and Special Topics form including the complete course syllabus. The Graduate Secretary will collect and distribute the titles of all directed studies courses to all graduate students one week before the start of the term. The instructor of the class will then individually accept appropriately qualified students. The GC approves each student's enrolment by signing the form. At the end of the term, the GC collects all student grades and ensures that they are entered into Banner.

Leave of Absence

The request must be made before the beginning of the term in which it will apply. The GC must collect documentation to support the request. This information is not sent to FGS, but the student should submit a letter to the GC to explain the reason for the request. These are usually granted without question. Only three leaves are normally possible during a graduate student's program. The clock stops on the student's program during the leave.

Transfers from MASc/MSc to PhD

The GC should ensure that there is a plan for the completion of comprehensive exams and remaining courses necessary to meet the requirements. Refer to the Faculty of Engineering Graduate Studies Handbook for details on documents required, timing and process. Transfers must be first approved at the departmental level, before being brought to the GSC for approval.

Once approved, the Chair of the GSC will send a memo detailing the GSC's support of the transfer and the completed FGS [Graduate Student Program Update](#) form.

Residency Rules

Following FGS regulation 2.3.2, PhD students must spend at least four of the first six terms on campus. For MASc/MSc students, the Faculty of Engineering has a similar rule, stating that those students must be on campus for at least two terms during the first year of the program. If students intend to be off-campus for more than one month during those periods, they must complete the Faculty of Engineering HQP Travel Information form and submit it to the GC for inclusion in their file.

2) Scholarships and Allocations

FGS Scholarship Allocations

The GC is responsible for signing off on FGS scholarship allocations to individual students. The process for making the decisions on students to receive allocations varies by department so the GC will follow the department-specific procedure. The deadline for the Graduate Student Payroll Information Profile (GSPIP) forms is in late June; decisions should be made by June 15 to give the Graduate Secretary/Department Administrator sufficient time to enter the information.

Scholarships and Fellowships

For all awards, students submit applications. For Harmonized Scholarships and NSERC awards, the process is entirely online. For the Faculty of Engineering Scholarships, students submit a form to the Graduate Secretary. GCs (or Graduate Secretaries) will complete the Faculty of Engineering Graduate Scholarship Nomination form and return it and the student applications to the Graduate Admissions Officer by the Faculty of Engineering deadline, usually a week after applications are due.

For the Faculty of Engineering Scholarships, the GC is responsible for nominating qualified students. Several scholarships have multiple awardees (e.g., Rossetti, Exxon Mobile) so most departments nominate all students who meet the minimum requirements for an award (rather than selecting the most qualified students). For all Faculty Scholarships, applicants must have GPA>3.7. The GC should consult the specific scholarship to determine the basis of the GPA calculation.

For Harmonized and NSERC awards, FGS collects the applications and forwards them to the department for review. The GC typically leads this review, either individually or as the chair of a departmental committee, ensuring that applicants have met the eligibility requirements. Once

the student submits an application to FGS, it cannot be further modified; GCs should consider an earlier internal deadline to provide feedback that the student can incorporate. Note: the department does not rank applications.

Deadlines for student submission in 2020/2021 were as follows:

Harmonized Scholarship: December 1

CGS-M: December 1

CGS-D: October 1

Faculty of Engineering Scholarships: May 31

Gillespie: April 30

Order of the White Rose: July 28

Note that it is possible for students to meet the deadline for acceptance into a program but miss the scholarship deadlines.

The GC is also responsible for choosing their department's nominee for the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS)-ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Awards, with nomination packages normally due in March.

The GC may also be involved more sporadically in more specialized awards, scholarships, and fellowships. For example, if a department has a Vanier Scholarship application, the GC is often asked to write the department's nomination letter on behalf of the Head. The GC is also tasked with choosing the Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship nominee for their department.

3) Applications and Admissions

To apply, students can consult this [link](#) for information on required documents. In summary, students must include:

- a) completed application form (either online or paper)
- b) transcripts
- c) two letters of reference (see below)
- d) a CV describing educational/professional experience and scholarships
- e) a statement of research interest
- f) English language proficiency scores if required

When an applicant completes the online application, the Registrar's Office sends a link to the academic referees to submit their letters of reference through the e-reference system.

If asked, stress to applicants that all necessary hardcopies of documents should be sent to:

Graduate Admissions Officer
Faculty of Engineering
Dalhousie University
5217 Morris Street; 4th Floor
PO Box 15000
Halifax, NS
B3H 4R2
CANADA
gsr@dal.ca

Be sure to explicitly state that documents are NOT to be sent to the department or the GC.

Consider developing an automatic reply email to the departmental graduate studies email address to capture the above information (PEAS and Industrial both have one).

Minimum language requirements for admission can be found [here](#).

GCs should ensure that all applications are available to all faculty members. The GC should skim each application to determine if the student has identified a particular supervisor and flag the application to their attention. Similarly, if an applicant has identified a particular research area, the GC should promote those applicants to colleagues with appropriate research programs.

Students must have an average 3.0 GPA (on Dalhousie's grade scale with maximum of 4.3) to be considered for admission. The GC signs each applicant's form, indicating acceptance or rejection, and returns it to GSR@dal.ca. For accepted students, the GC must ensure that the funding level is sufficient. At a minimum, students should be funded at the levels stated [here](#). Note that FGS recommends substantially higher minimum funding targets.

Deadlines for applications:

	Canadian Applicants	Non-Canadian Applicants
For September Admission	June 1	April 1
For January Admission	October 31	August 31
For Summer Admission	February 28	December 31

4) Defences

PhD defences are largely handled by FGS. Occasionally the department may be asked to contact the external examiner to obtain their CV to include with FGS's form '[Request to Arrange Oral Defence](#)'. When requesting the CV, the GC should ask that the examiner include some evidence of experience in both supervising and examining doctoral students. Department Heads, not

GCs, sign that form. The GC will often serve as the departmental representative during the PhD defence. They also ensure that defence notices are distributed within the department.

MASc/MSc defences require that students submit to the Graduate Secretary the Faculty of Engineering's 'Appointment for an Oral Examination and Thesis Submission' form at least ten days before the defence. This must be signed by all committee members. The GC will confirm that all program requirements except the defence have been met and, if necessary, help identify a moderator. The GC will also ensure that defence notices are prepared and distributed within the department. After the defence, the result will be conveyed to the department using the Faculty of Engineering's 'Result of an Oral Examination' form which the GC will sign and add to the student's file. Finally, there is an FGS form called '[Master's Thesis Approval Form](#)' that must be signed by all committee members and submitted to FGS with the final thesis.

Final presentations for MEng research projects do not require GC involvement as these are normally administered by the student's supervisor and their one additional supervisory committee member. The supervisor should notify the GC and Graduate Secretary when an MEng student 'passes' this presentation.

5) Role in Graduate Studies Committee

The GC serves as liaison between the department and the GSC, ensuring that all new regulations are communicated to the department and then implemented. They also represent their department at the GSC by providing departmental input on new initiatives arising in the GSC.

New course proposals

All course proposals should have the content described in the [APCC Guide to Graduate Course Proposals](#) (cover letter, syllabus, etc). The Faculty of Engineering has a form (Graduate Curriculum Change and Navigator Entry Form) that captures the required information. Note that: 1) APCC will not approve undergraduate courses as pre-requisites of graduate courses; and 2) new courses must be approved at the Departmental level before coming to GSC. New courses approved at the GSC level will proceed to the Engineering Faculty Council for consideration.

Scholarships

The GSC will meet in June to decide on the Faculty of Engineering scholarships. The Dean makes decisions on the Gillespie award but may ask for GSC support for their recommendations. The GSC also decides on the nominee for the Order of the White Rose in a separate meeting in August.

Navigator Suite

The GC will use the Navigator Suite to approve new courses at the departmental level (Graduate Secretaries normally initiate the process). The Graduate Secretary can usually provide good advice on the use of the system, and a guide ('Navigator Suite – User Guide') can be found on the GSC Brightspace page. GCs will also approve departmental calendar entries through Navigator.

Calendar Entries

The GC is responsible for confirming the calendar entries for all graduate programs in their department. In a typical year, this mainly involves updating faculty and staff listings, and minor changes to course descriptions.

6) Other Duties

One of the most time-consuming duties of the GC is answering questions related to academic matters from potential applicants, current students and faculty members. The Graduate Admissions Officer in the Faculty of Engineering is a very useful resource.

GCs must ensure that course grades are sent to the Registrar when required, particularly for Directed Studies/Independent learning courses.

The GC should also maintain a list of all students in their department's programs, along with dates of latest progress reports and time in program.

Each department's FGS membership list is maintained by the GC. They must ensure that the list is current (through addition, removal and renewal) and use it to update their department's program entries in the Graduate Calendar. Forms for addition of members can be found [here](#). Members can be removed as necessary by contacting fgs.memberships@dal.ca.

The GCs are also often responsible for annual (or more regular) graduate student orientations, which should include a refresher on program logistics, graduate courses, forms, and dates. Throughout the term, the GC may also lead additional workshops related to topics such as succeeding in graduate school, communicating research, or publishing journal papers. In some departments, workshops such as these are built into the formal graduate seminar course, while in others, these workshops are external to the seminar course. The seminar course in most departments involves an annual or semi-annual graduate research conference that the GC is responsible for overseeing. In other departments, it involves a weekly meeting where students or guest speakers present their work, with the GC acting as chair. At the end of each term, the GC is responsible for ensuring that the grades for the seminar courses (IP, F or P) are submitted

through Banner. For students who defend their thesis earlier in the term, a manual grade entry will be necessary.

Useful Contacts at FGS

graduate.studies@dal.ca for form submission

program.officer@dal.ca for interpretation of FGS regulations

thesis@dal.ca for anything thesis-related

gradfunding@dal.ca for graduate funding matters

Dates for Major Activities

May 30	Faculty of Engineering Scholarship Deadline
June 30	GPIPs for Allocations
Oct 1	CGS-D Deadline
Dec 1	CGS-M and Harmonized Scholarships Deadline