

# Melton Group Graduate Student Guidelines (2019 - 2020)

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Welcome to graduate school and my research group! This documents outlines the general guidelines, expectations, and norms of undertaking your graduate degree with me as your principle supervisor.

## General group structure

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As my principle position is a Research Scientist with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), my position with SEOS and UVic is that of an adjunct professor. Also, as a result of my position with ECCC, I am not required to seek out external grants to fund my research. However I do, on occasion, as it allows me to investigate projects and research questions that I would not otherwise have the time or resources to tackle. Most work at ECCC is done by research scientists or other researchers in more permanent roles. My group is then usually rather small with a changing mixture of post-docs, undergraduate student co-op interns and graduate students. My post-docs and interns are generally located in our ECCC offices but the graduate students are hosted in the SEOS facilities.

Since I am an adjunct, any graduate student I supervise also has a UVic co-supervisor. This is a good system to ensure the students are proceeding according to the norms of the department and also to ensure the student remains connected to SEOS as a whole. While different student projects may have different UVic co-supervisors, most will be with [Prof. Colin Goldblatt](#) as his research interests are most complimentary and he is generous enough to volunteer for the role. General day-to-day interactions will be with me although Colin will occasionally join in on our meetings to keep himself up to speed on your progress both through the degree requirements and your research. I include his graduate student guidelines document so you are aware of his expectations/norms.

Since Colin's document is quite comprehensive please see them for information on the number of classes to be taken, the expectation of GPA in those classes (the GPA is important as it makes one eligible for fellowships), teaching and presentations, authorship, health and safety, and funding calculations. My group generally follows the guidelines and norms of Colin's and below I emphasize further additional considerations that I feel merit expanding upon.

## Supervisory style and expectations

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In my own work I value a good work ethic, high-quality science, interacting with my colleagues in a caring, collegial, friendly, and productive manner, and maintaining a good work-life balance. These values are then also what I expect of my graduate students.

For work ethic, I suggest treating graduate school like a job whereby you work regular hours (35 - 40/wk) understanding this may fluctuate depending on deadlines due to courses, conferences, etc. A workday fit within the hours of 8 - 6 is generally recommended as it permits the most overlap with me and other members of the university community. If that doesn't work for you due to your own natural work rhythms, talk to me and we can work out a compromise that works for all. Note I don't suggest 60 hours weeks as no one works well for that long a period. Come into school, work in a focused manner, go home/play/exercise/socialize. If you work in a focused manner you won't need long hours to be productive and you will have time outside of your academics for all the rest life has to offer. Developing this habit of being productive and focused while working reasonable hours now will result in a sustainable and enjoyable work pattern for the rest of your career.

For high quality science, we will be endeavouring to publish your work in the best journals in our field so the standard expected of your research will be very high. Needless to say, academic honesty is absolutely mandatory. While your research will be guaranteed to go through high highs and low lows, I will be there to help guide you through the low points and of course, celebrate your highs. Modern research is collaborative and with your supervisory team in place, you will have the support you need.

For interactions with your colleagues and me, like any workplace it is important to work well with others. Treat people how you would like to be treated and it will generally work out well.

For work-life balance, regular use of vacations is encouraged to maintain enthusiasm for your work. I would also suggest using breaks for physical activity to keep your body happy too. I practice what I preach; I generally go for exercise each day around 2-3 for about an hour (so if you can't find me...) as I find it helps me keep my focus on my work when I am in the office and I work more productively. I also commute by bike which is a nice morning wake up prior to hitting my desk.

A weekly meeting of roughly an hour with me is expected as it allows me to keep updated on your work and offer what assistance I can to ensure your work progresses. I am also available as needed but my office will be moving in the new year to a university site ([Queenswood](#)) off the main campus (~15 - 20 minute walk through a residential area). While I am happy to help especially as it ensures your project will stay on track, I do encourage you to work on problems as they arise to develop your own skills and knowledge. The key is understanding when to seek help and when to grind it out yourself. I generally expect that we will meet more frequently at the start of your project but that need will decrease as you become more familiar with your work and our model.

For publications, I expect you to be lead author on publications relating directly to your work. Writing these papers can sometimes be daunting but this is a task that we will approach together. I find that I often don't fully understand my project until forced to sit down and write it up so I place great value on seeing your work published in high quality journals so that our publically-funded work benefits others in the scientific, and beyond, community.

## Taking care of your work and self

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Graduate school can be stressful. You have a lot of independence and the environment is much different than undergraduate. If you are an international student it is also a new country and academic system. During grad school you are learning how to do research and you will come up against many setbacks. Let's not sugar coat it - Research is hard to do well. It is also highly rewarding if you have a curious mind and enjoy solving difficult problems. I view my role as a guide during your degree. While the expectations of a M.Sc. are different than a Ph.D. in either case I don't wish to be 'driving' your research for you. As your knowledge and skills develop I expect you to be assuming ownership of your project and, in collaboration with me, lead your work to a successful conclusion. Graduate students are decidedly not simply a form of 'cheap labour' but rather researchers in training whose work will be advancing our field as a whole. I will thus treat you as such.

Because graduate school can be stressful please take care of your mental and physical health. Taking a preventative approach is best here (see above for work-life balance). If you feel that you are having difficulties or even experiencing harassment/bullying/violence/discrimination, please talk to me. If you don't feel comfortable talking to me consider talking to Colin, the SEOS Grad Advisor, the SEOS Director, or other UVic appropriate mechanisms. It is in both of our best interests to have you happy, healthy, contributing to our group and advancing your project.

## Funding

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As my funding is project specific, I generally don't have much flexibility on how the funds can be used. I also share Colin's annoyance/exasperation about how funding of graduate school is handled at UVic/ in Canada. I will endeavour to fund you according to the same formula that Colin applies. Also since my funding is project specific there may be requirements such as that we attend a larger project meeting or contribute to project activities. I will try and make these clear as they become known to me.

A few further bits of information relevant to funding are the typical costs in Victoria. These amounts are correct to the best of my knowledge.

Victoria, while beautiful, is not a cheap place to live. Typical rent for shared off-campus accommodation (a room in a shared house) is presently around \$600 - 700/month. The deposit on a rental, which is due when a rental contract is signed is half a months rent but returned to you when you move out if you haven't done any damage. The BC Medical Services Plan, which is required, is about \$75/mo, so while health care is 'free' and a right, you do need to pay this minor fee monthly but your visits to healthcare professionals/hospitals are fully covered. For foreign students, a student visa is about \$100/ yr, you can likely use your existing cell phone and just buy a SIM card (~\$10), plans can be either pay-as-you-go or monthly. Monthly cell plans cost anywhere from a basic \$30/mo upwards. Due to the bus pass being included in your student fees owning a car is not necessary although you can cheaply rent a bike for the course of your program and Victoria is very nice to cycle in. There is a car share if you should need a car (Modo), it is generally fairly convenient/reasonable. The transit/bus system is safe and generally considered to be well run and reliable. Note, for a \$25 fee once/yr UVic will take it the fees your pay so you don't need to be able to pay it all at once.

## Final comments

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My goal for you is to have you complete your degree in a timely fashion, with an appropriate amount of high-quality peer-reviewed publications, having enjoyed the process and feeling that you learned and grew a great deal during the process. I am here to support you in your efforts to achieve this.