



Department of Geography

Graduate Student Orientation Guide

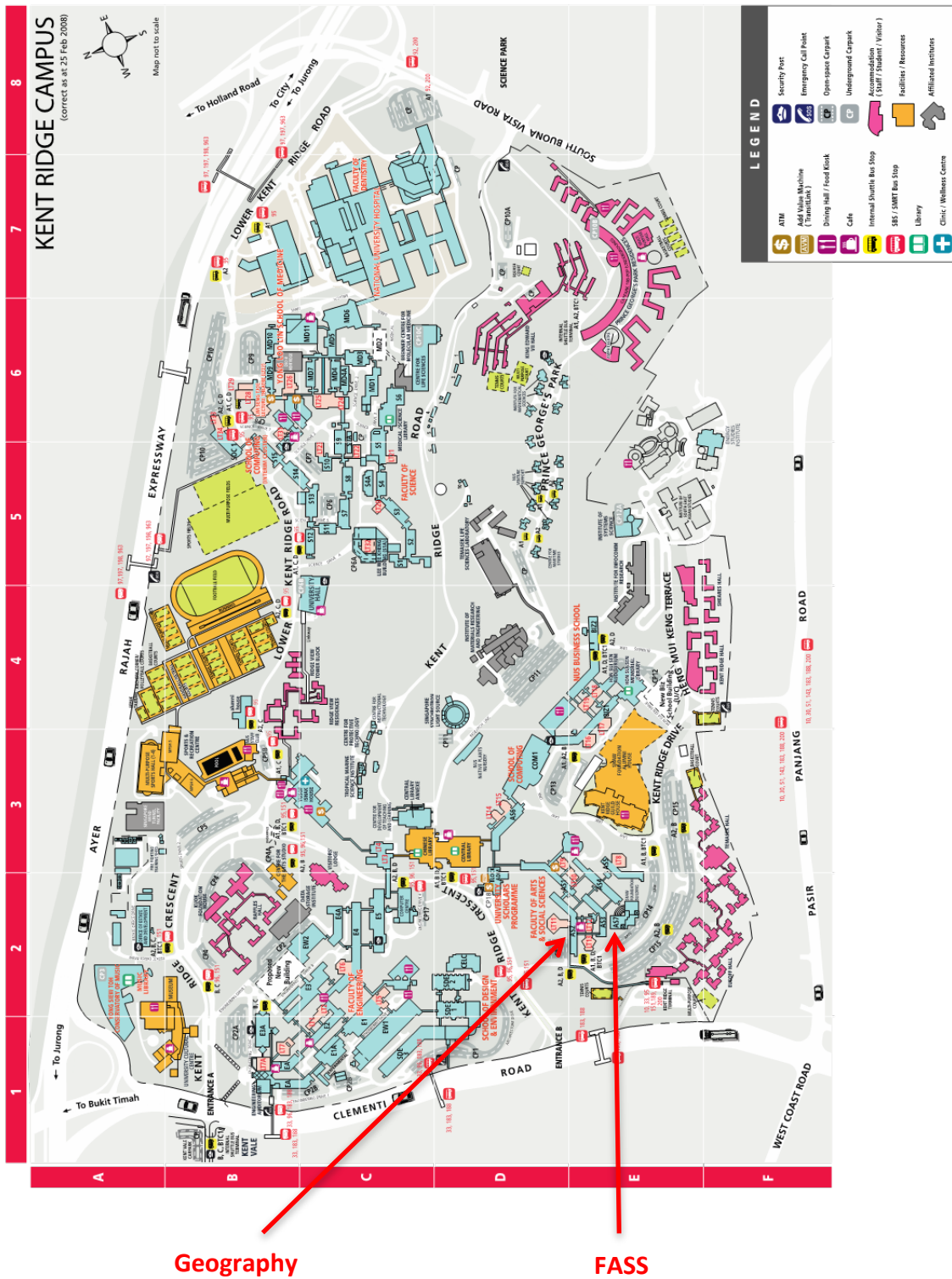


Academic Year 2025-2026

NUS Geography website: [Department of Geography – NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences](#)



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/844149515642623/>



Map of main NUS campus **Geography** departmental office and majority of labs and offices = Block AS2, **Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)** = Block AS7. A larger map with **University Town** also shown is at: [NUS Campus Map](#)

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Welcome from the Department Graduate Studies Coordinator

Welcome to the Department of Geography

We are delighted to welcome you to the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore (NUS)! Enrolling in a graduate research program is a major decision in your careers and we value your choice to join us in the Department of Geography. We look forward to working with you and supporting your research journey over the coming years.

Embarking on graduate research is a very exciting opportunity to pursue further inquiry into questions that you are curious about, that are stimulating, and that can be nationally and globally impactful. Graduate research is also challenging and fun! You are joining one of the top ranked Geography departments in the world and you will be well supported in achieving your research aspirations. Geography at NUS aims to offer a world-class graduate programme that is academically rich, engaging, and that enhances the experiences and professional development of graduate students and provides a solid foundation for future career development.

The Geography Department is home to 36 faculty who are leading scholars in their fields of expertise. These faculty are here to guide and support you in your research programmes. You are also joining a diverse and collegial group of graduate research students that are sharing similar research journeys. Everyone in Geography, both staff and students, looks forward to seeing you around the Department, and to helping you achieve your ambitions. The Department is committed to creating a space of equality, inclusion and safety (online or face-to-face). We expect all faculty/staff and students to treat each other with dignity and respect.

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

Once again, we welcome you to the Department of Geography, and wish you an extremely successful and enjoyable time with us. We look forward to seeing you all develop individually and collectively, well-equipped to deal with life's challenges and therefore able to make valuable contributions not only to your chosen area of research, but also to our discipline, and wider worlds.

Professor Petra Tschakert
Graduate Co-ordinator

Associate Professor Massimo Lupascu
Deputy Graduate Coordinator

Brief History of Geography

Geography at NUS has a relatively long history, having been established in 1928 as one of three initial subjects offered in the then newly formed Faculty of Arts, Raffles College (which in 1949 became part of the University of Malaya, and then in 1962 the University of Singapore, before eventually settling on the name of National University of Singapore in 1980).

The Department of Geography has grown substantially over the years and is currently recognised as one of the most widely recognised and highly rated departments of Geography in the world (5th in the QS rankings). Currently there are more than 30 academic staff in the Department, along with several teaching and research fellows, eight members of support staff and approximately 50 graduate research (masters and PhD).

Introduction to the Orientation Guide

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

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

Please bookmark these two web pages as they provide important information which you will refer to during your candidature at different stages:

[Arts & Social Sciences \(nus.edu.sg\)](http://nus.edu.sg) - links to Faculty-level information on programme requirements, funding sources, fees, courses available, examination matters etc.

NUS Graduate School [NUSGS](#) – links to explanation on thesis submission procedures, progress reports, etc.

International students, new to Singapore, are also advised to consult the NUS International Students website at [Office of Student Affairs \(nus.edu.sg\)](http://nus.edu.sg)

Contact details

Once settled in the Department, your first point of contact should be your thesis advisor(s). **All Masters students have a nominated thesis advisor in the Department: all PhD students have *at least two* nominated thesis advisors, at least one of whom must be based in the Department.** The co-advisor for a PhD student should be decided in the second semester. PhD students should discuss with the primary advisor on this as early as possible. In addition to your thesis advisor(s), in the Department you will also quickly get to know Pauline Lee and the Graduate Coordinators – Professor Petra Tschakert and Assoc Prof Massimo Lupascu and the Graduate Student representatives (GSRs). Pauline’s main responsibility is to provide administrative support to the Department’s graduate studies programme. The GSRs provide a link between staff and graduate students, and help maintain a vibrant community of researchers in Geography.

Relevant contact details in the Department:

Professor Petra Tschakert
Graduate Coordinator. Email: petra@nus.edu.sg

Assoc Prof Massimo Lupascu
Deputy Graduate Coordinator. Email: mlupascu@nus.edu.sg

Ms Pauline Lee
Senior Executive, Graduate studies. Email: geoleepl@nus.edu.sg

Taught Masters Programme

Dr Yan Yingwei
Director, MSc in Applied GIS. Email: Yingwei.yan@nus.edu.sg

Assoc Prof Massimo Lupascu
Director, MSc in Climate Change & Sustainability. Email : mlupascu@nus.edu.sg

Mr Kowin Chen
Full-time Teaching Assistant. Email: kc99@nus.edu.sg

Mr Eiffel Tan
GIS manager. Email: eiffelzh@nus.edu.sg

Graduate Student Representatives

Research Programme
Ms Hazel Oakley: hazel.oakley@u.nus.edu

MSc in Applied GIS
Ms Zeng Zi Rui : e1025426@u.nus.edu

MSc in Climate Change & Sustainability
Mr Rubens Setiawan: e1324749@u.nus.edu

And in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), NUS:

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

Ms Susan Khoo
Email: faskhoos@nus.edu.sg

New graduate student information

As a new graduate student in Geography, please make sure that you are fully aware of the information hosted on the Department's Graduate webpages:

[Department of Geography – NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences](#)

Information on Faculty-level research clusters is at:

[Research Clusters – NUS Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences](#)

Also, the FASS webpage provides an extremely useful **Graduate Student Portal***: <https://myportal.nus.edu.sg/studentportal/fas/gd/>

* to a wealth of information on graduate studies such as financial aid for conference & research, thesis-related matters, and forms repository. Please favourite the link.

***Only current graduate students are allowed access to this secured site with their NUS email ID and 2FA verification.**

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



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

Departmental office

The departmental (administration) office (Block AS2, level 2, #03-01) is open from 8.30am to 6pm on Monday to Thursday, and 8.30am to 5.30 pm on Friday, excluding lunch time from 1–2pm and close on weekends and public holidays.

Thesis advisors

All Masters students have one thesis advisor in the Department, while all PhD students have at least two thesis advisors, at least one of whom is in the Department. Please arrange to meet with your thesis advisor(s) as soon as possible following your registration. New graduate students in Geography are required to complete a checklist in cooperation with their thesis advisor(s). A copy of the checklist is provided as **Appendix 1** in this Guide (*FASS Checklist for Working Relationship between Thesis advisor and Research Student*). Please complete and submit to Pauline (geoleep1@nus.edu.sg) **within one month** of your candidature as a graduate student commencing (within one month of registering). You should also keep a personal copy of the checklist, and provide a copy (or copies) for your thesis advisor(s). Completion of the checklist is

compulsory and is intended to ensure a satisfactory student-thesis advisor relationship; completing the checklist is therefore to your advantage.

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

The Department has also produced supervision guidelines for graduate research students and faculty. A copy of these guidelines is included as [Appendix 2](#). Please read through these guidelines, and feel free to raise any questions that you may have regarding the guidelines or with the supervision process with your thesis advisor(s).

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

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

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

Governance

Geography at NUS is managed through a system of committees that provide support to the Department Committee, chaired by the Head of Department (Professor David Taylor). The Geography Management Team (GMT) meets in advance of the Department Committee to receive and review recommendations of the Undergraduate Studies, Graduate Studies, Research, and Student and External Relations committees. All these committees conduct meetings on a regular and frequent basis (generally at least twice a semester). Recommendations from the GMT are discussed and decided upon at Department Committee meetings.

The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) is currently chaired by Professor Petra Tschakert. The GSC meets on a monthly basis during each semester. The work of the GSC is guided by the draft Geography Graduate Programmes Strategy (see [Appendix 4](#)). Graduate students are represented directly on the GSC. There are currently two GSRs (Hazel and Zuming) who were elected by the community of graduate students in Geography for the period of at least one year. Elections generally take place annually. For information on the roles and responsibilities of graduate student representatives, see [Appendix 5](#) of this Guide.

Note from the roles and responsibilities document ([Appendix 5](#)) that *“The overall role of the graduate student representatives in the Department is to maintain a vibrant, informed and well-resourced community of graduate students in Geography at NUS”*. The graduate student representatives also represent graduate students in Geography on the FASS Graduate Student Committee.

Health & Health insurance

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

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

For research scholars, the premium will automatically be deducted from the scholarship stipend on a semester-by-semester basis. Graduate students who are planning to carry out fieldwork, especially overseas fieldwork, should discuss with their thesis advisor(s) whether additional insurance is required/advisable.

The emergency number for students to call when they are overseas is: **(65) 6836 2922 (24/7)**. Please remember to read up your policy and link and take note of your [policy number and period](#) as these are essential information that you have to provide in the event that you call for medical help when overseas.



Singapore's skyline

Risk assessment

All graduate research students must complete a formal Risk Assessment procedure before the PhD QE, irrespective of the location or the nature of the fieldwork. The same is also true for laboratory-based work. Students are strongly advised to seek advice from their thesis advisor(s) regarding the completion of the Risk Assessment in accordance with university regulations.

The risk assessment workflow and assessment are found on our website [Department of Geography – NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences](#) via a link on the landing page ([Safety & Health @ Geography](#)), or directly from <https://nusu.sharepoint.com/teams/SafetyCompass> (refer Appendix 6 of this orientation guide)

You may also be required to obtain clearance or exemption from NUS's Institutional Review Board (NUS-IRB) before embarking upon the data collection part of your research. Again, you should discuss this matter with your thesis advisor(s). NUS-IRB's webpage is at: <http://www.nus.edu.sg/irb/>. PhD students should normally initiate this process after clearing their qualifying examination (refer Appendix 6 of this orientation guide)

Computer accounts

You will have an e-mail account at NUS that will be your official point of contact. All communications from the Department/FASS/NUS to students will be via the official email account. As such, you are expected to check your account frequently. You will be able to access your email account from using your NUSNET userid (e.g. eXXXXXXX@u.nus.edu) and NUSNET password. You will be given your NUSNET user id & password following registration. You can reset your password after your first login. You will retain this lifelong NUS email even after you graduate. Only students who withdrew from programme will have the email terminated.

Student will receive an e-degree scroll and an e-transcript in [NUS lifelong email account](#) within two weeks from their date of conferment. Please check your Clutter/Spam folder if you cannot find the email in your inbox. For more information on this, please refer to Office of the University Registrar (OUR) website at <https://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/student-records/degree-scrolls>

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

Desk space

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

Photocopying/printing services

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

Use of Library Facilities

You can access the NUS-level library facilities during the following hours:
During Semester: Monday to Friday, 9am-6pm. Saturday, 10am to 5pm.
Closed on Sunday and public holidays.

Please note that any revision of opening hours will be announced through the library's website: [NUS Libraries Portal](#)

As a graduate student you may find yourself spending more time accessing and perusing digital holdings than on personal visits to the library. You have to login using your NUS credentials to gain access to the materials.

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

CO-OP Book stores in NUS

NUS Co-Op (<http://coop.nus.edu.sg/>) may be able to assist you in ordering books relating to your studies. Tel: 6777 0325; Email: copfocs1@nus.edu.sg

Store Location: <https://nuscoop.nus.edu.sg/about-nus-coop/store-locations/>

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

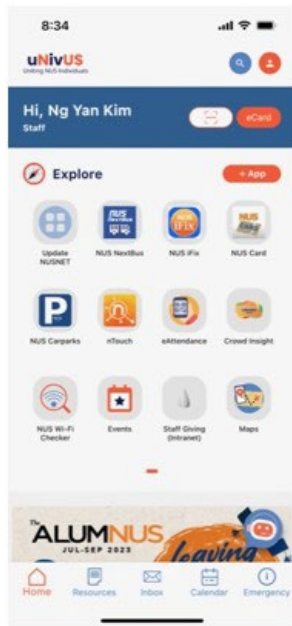
Booking of rooms in the Department

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

E-Business Cards

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences is committed to promoting environmental sustainability, and they have decided to discourage the use of printed name cards with effect from 7 July 2023. Instead, staff & students are encouraged to adopt digital alternatives, such as eName Cards. Instructions on how to access eBusiness Card on uNivUS are explained below.

1. There is an 'eCard' option at the top right corner in the uNivUS mobile app that is for staff & student (see below screenshot).

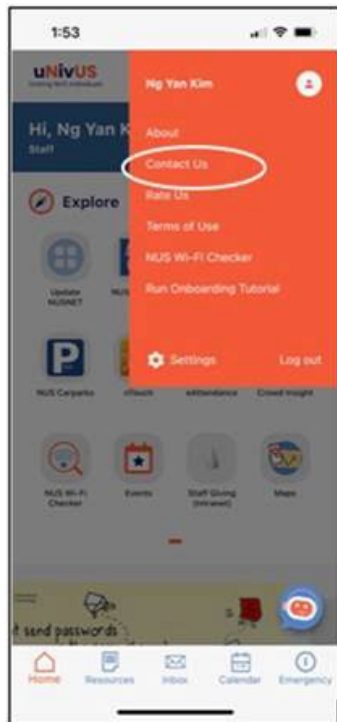


2. Within the 'eCard' there is a Business Card option which contains the eBusiness Card and its QR link (see below screenshot).



If you encounter problems to access, please contact as follows:

1. Within uNivUS Mobile App:
 - Select your personal profile at the top right corner.
 - In the drop-down list, choose "Contact Us" to raise queries or provide feedback to the uNivUS team.



2. By Email

- Query of feedback can be sent directly to univus@nus.edu.sg

Transport to/from and around campus

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

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

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

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

Banks

You may open a bank account at either DBS, POSB, Overseas Chinese Bank Corporation at Clementi Central.

Food outlets

There are many food outlets located on the NUS campus close to the Department ¹.

Geography students and staff can often be found in discussions – some more animated than others – at the Coffee Roasters at AS8, or a café at Ventus, opposite AS2. Two hawker centres near NUS provide reasonably priced local food: one along West Coast Road and one in Clementi

¹ list of campus food outlets: <https://uci.nus.edu.sg/oca/retail-dining/food-and-beverages/>

Central. The row of food outlets on Clementi Road, just down from the Kent Ridge Bus Terminus, is also well worth a visit from time to time.



Graduate students and staff collecting sediment cores off the coast of Singapore

Department information

Geography at NUS is one of the most widely recognised and highly rated departments of Geography in the world. Currently there are more than 40 academic staff in the Department, along with several teaching and research fellows, seven members of support staff and approximately 50 graduate research (masters and PhD) and over 50 MSc students. For information on individual members of staff, please find us under PEOPLE in the landing page: [Department of Geography – NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences](#)

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

For PhD & Masters students: [Graduate Students by Research – Department of Geography \(nus.edu.sg\)](#)

Research groups in Geography

All academic staff and graduate students are welcome to join one or more of the three core research groups in the Department. For information on research in Geography at NUS, please check out the different research groups (refer below). The main remit of the research groups is to promote the collaborative and individual research efforts of members of the group. Research students are expected to play a prominent role in the activities of research groups, including participating in seminars, workshops and reading group meetings linked to their group(s).

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

- **Politics, Economies, And Space (PEAS)** meets every Tuesday noon.
[Politics, Economies And Space \(PEAS\) – Department of Geography \(nus.edu.sg\)](#)

- **Social and Cultural Geographies (SCG)** meets every Wednesday noon.
[Social Cultural Geographies \(SCG\) – Department of Geography \(nus.edu.sg\)](#)
- **Tropical Environmental Change (TEC)** meets every other Friday lunchtime
[Tropical Environmental Change \(TEC\) – Department of Geography \(nus.edu.sg\)](#)

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

Discussion groups

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

Facilities

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

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



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

Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography (SJTG)

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

The journal is at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%291467-9493>



Laikipia, Kenya

Graduate student-organised events and participation

Events and hang-outs

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

1. **NUS Geography Graduate Students' Facebook Page**² It is not an open group, so please request to join it using your Facebook account, and one of the admins will approve your request.
2. **WhatsApp group "Fun Geo Grads!"** It is a platform for general communication, where the GSRs will periodically send useful campus life information and members can share events, announcements and ideas with each other.

Social events like hikes and BBQs will be organised throughout the year and you are encouraged to participate, or even co-host these events. All graduate students are also encouraged to suggest or plan events and activities at any time of the semester. These could include trips to local landmarks, dinners, games, ad hoc/informal discussions and etc.

The department social media

The department created a social media account – X (formerly known as Twitter). The account is a joint initiative of GSC and SERC and has now been approved by Head of Department (HOD). The account is managed by two faculty members (currently Dr. Max Lupascu and Dr. Shaun Teo) and coordinating GSRs.

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

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

Feedback and participation

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

² <https://www.facebook.com/groups/844149515642623/>

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

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

- Update notice boards (departmental and student-run)
- Maintain printer in the graduate room
- Run Whatsapp and Facebook groups
- Do desk allocation every semester
- Organise welcome parties at the start of each semester
- Attend department-level GSC meetings as representatives of the graduate student community
- Attend faculty-level meetings as representatives of the graduate student community
- Update the student community about salient points from GSC / faculty-level meetings
- Organise informal gatherings
- Needs assessment survey
- Maintain an online repository of useful information (e.g. about funding sources,etc).



Photo: Staff and graduate students (research and coursework programmes) - Social event on 6th September 2024!





- 1) **Friday Pub Outings** - following the regular Friday afternoon departmental seminars outings to local pubs/hawker centers are often organised, so that graduate students (and members of staff!) have a chance to discuss topics or socialise. NUS's O Bar has become a popular venue for these informal discussions.
- 2) **Frequent campus meetings.** Many graduate students benefit from daily/weekly informal meals and office time together to discuss research, new books, or share tips on Teaching Assistant duties. New students are encouraged to plug into these informal networks around the Department, as current students will be ready and willing to help the new students adjust to and thrive in their new surroundings.
- 3) **The Geography Graduate Workshop** is an annual event that for AY2024/2025 took place on **25th April 2025**. The Workshop is entirely organised and hosted by graduate students in Geography Details of the Geography Graduate Workshop 2024 can be found at: [Graduate Workshop – Department of Geography \(nus.edu.sg\)](https://nus.edu.sg/graduate-workshop-department-of-geography), and the [programme booklet.indd \(nus.edu.sg\)](https://nus.edu.sg/graduate-workshop-programme-booklet)
Past workshops can also be found on the same page.

- 4) **NUS Geographical Society events.** The Geog Soc (pronounced “JEOG-SOCK”), as it is affectionately referred to, is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the needs, welfare and aspirations of all Geography students in NUS; in maintaining a strong and close relationship between the student community and faculty in the Department; and in promoting the discipline of Geography among the Singaporean student community. The Geog Soc enjoys a long history and tradition of close ties with the Department, extending back to the days of the former University of Singapore. Today, the Geog Soc continues to serve as the umbrella body under which students studying and researching Geography can find both academic and social support. This is achieved through the numerous activities organised throughout the year.
See: [NUS Geographical Society – Department of Geography](#)
- 5) **Geosphere Magazine**, produced by the Geog Soc, provides an outlet for students to share research experiences, unique insights related to their work, and personal interests. Anyone interested in writing/layout/photography is welcomed to get involved.
See: [NUS Geographical Society – Department of Geography](#)
- 6) **FASS Research Clusters.** All of the Faculty’s Research Clusters have relevance to geographers. See [Research Clusters – NUS Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences](#) Graduate students can be coordinators of Cluster reading groups, which provide a great opportunity for the development of inter-department links and cross-pollination of ideas, and excellent fora for discussion and exploration.
- 7) **Participation in conferences and workshops off-campus.** PhD & Masters students in Geography are eligible to apply for travel grants to enable their participation in meetings taking place off-campus. Many students avail of these funds to allow their participation in international conferences overseas.

Curricular requirements

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

NG5001 and NG5002 are compulsory courses for PhD students and cannot be used to fulfil as coursework requirement.

[Guide for Graduate Research Students](#)

Course registration details will be sent by NUS and Pauline a month before intake period.

Masters students have to take a *minimum* of four courses unless otherwise specified in your NUS offer letter, including the Graduate Research Seminar course. Note that the graduation requirement for Masters students comprises a pass mark in the thesis (maximum 30,000 words) and a GPA score of at least 3.0.

PhD students have to take a *minimum* of six courses unless otherwise specified in your NUS offer letter, including the Graduate Research Seminar course. Note that the graduation requirement for PhD students comprises clearing the PhD **Qualifying Exam (QE)** ([Appendix 6](#)), a pass mark in a standard thesis (maximum 80,000 words) or Article-based submission ([Appendix 3](#)) and a GPA score of at least 3.5 and a maximum of two failed marks for courses. PhD students also have to pass an oral defence relating to their thesis or Article-based submission. PhD students in Geography will take their QE during their second year of registration. Failure to pass the QE will result in a student's registration being terminated, generally before or at the end of their second year. Students should start planning the QE by end of their first year.

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

Although students are allowed to fail courses, they are also expected to repeat (for core courses such as the GRS course) or replace (for electives) those failed courses in order to graduate. With effect from 2015/16, students are only allowed to repeat up to three courses, and can only repeat a failed course once. For further information, you are strongly advised to speak with your thesis advisor.



Chinatown, Singapore

Masters students can seek an upgrade to PhD subject to recommendation by the Department and approval of the FASS. Students wishing to upgrade **must** have completed the following coursework requirement before proceeding to the QE:

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

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

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

2) Current Masters by Research students who wish to upgrade to a PhD and to continue their studies in the Department are strongly encouraged to complete the Masters thesis before reapplying to join the Department as a PhD student.



*Lake MohiGPA – a volcanic crater lake on the island of Luzon, Philippines.
Research in the Department takes place in many parts of Southeast Asia,
and more broadly in Asia and in the tropics*

Teaching opportunities for graduate students

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

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

The GSC has put together a set of **teaching guidelines for graduate students in Geography**. A copy of these guidelines is provided in [Appendix 7](#) of this Guide.

Funding and fees

There are numerous potential sources of funding for graduate students in Geography. Some of the sources may be well established and stable from one year to the next. These sources are therefore relatively predictable, and include support from FASS to participate in conferences and research. In other cases, financial support may be available through a research project that your thesis advisor(s) is(are) involved in, or perhaps an organisation that you have contacted yourself.

Support for Overseas or Local Fieldwork

Graduate students in Geography are eligible to apply for support for fieldwork (airfare, subsistence and other research-related expenses):

- PhD students – S\$6000 (overseas), S\$3000 (local)
- Masters students - S\$3000 (overseas), S\$1500 (local)

Please check the Graduate Student Portal for calls period.

Travel Grant for Conference

Travel grants are available for graduate students to present the results of your research at conferences. Note that funds to attend conferences are discretionary and are being reduced, year-on-year. Information on the conference grant can be found [here](#).

PhD top-up (upon passing the PhD Qualifying Examination)

PhD students are eligible for a top-up of S\$500 per month (for a total of 24 months and up to the end of month 48 of a PhD candidature, whichever is earlier). The PhD top-up will not be disbursed during an extension of the Research Scholarship. Recipients of the PGF, LKCGS and GTF are not entitled to a top-up after clearing their QE.



Super-trees, Singapore

Students who are interested in basing themselves at a university overseas for part of their research may be able to apply for additional financial support from the Graduate SEP (GSEP).

For further information, see: [Student Exchange Programme \(SEP\) – NUS Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences](#)

Enquiries should be emailed to: [Contact FASS – NUS Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences](#)

FEES

Regarding graduate fees, please note that students who are awarded a NUS Research Scholarship & Tuition Fee Assistance need not pay the tuition fee. For scholars, Copyright Fee, Student Activity

& Services Fees and Academic Related Fees will be deducted from the scholarship stipend. Such fees are either deducted on a semester-by-semester basis, in July and December for, respectively, Semester I and Semester II, or on academic year basis. The Registration Fee, which is payable once only – at registration, is also deducted from the scholarship stipend.

Self-financed students or those who are no longer in receipt of a scholarship will pay to the Office of Financial Services by the stipulated deadline, otherwise a **late fee will be imposed**. Students who had paid a full semester fees will receive a partial refund provided their thesis is submitted for examination to the Student Service Centre by the **last Friday of September (in semester 1)** or **last Friday of March (in semester 2)**. For details of the stipulated timeline for fees payment, please refer to this link: [NUS Office of Finance - Students](#)

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

Self-financed or paying Graduate students can obtain the updated annual tuition fee imposed for their cohort at: [GRADUATE TUITION FEES PAYABLE PER ANNUM \(nus.edu.sg\)](#)

Seek help early!

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

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

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

Professor Petra Tschakert
Graduate Coordinator. Email: petra@nus.edu.sg

Associate Professor Massimo Lupascu
Deputy Graduate Coordinator. Email: mlupascu@nus.edu.sg

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

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

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

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

Or University Counselling Services (UCS), part of the University Health Centre:
[For Students](#)

Email them at uhc_counselling@nus.edu.sg

Or make an appointment Tel: 6516-2376

Lifeline NUS Tel: 6516-7777 (24 hours hotline for psychological emergencies only)

Appendices

Appendix 1: FASS Checklist for Working Relationship between Thesis Advisor and Research Student (P.29)

Appendix 2: Graduate Research Student Supervision Guidelines for students and faculty (P. 34)

Appendix 3: Regulations concerning the Article-based PhD Thesis pathway in Geography (P. 49)

Appendix 4: NUS Geography Graduate Student Strategy (P. 51)

Appendix 5: Graduate student representatives in the Department of Geography, NUS: role and responsibilities (P. 54)

Appendix 6: Information on the PhD Qualifying Exam (P. 55)

Appendix 7: Teaching Guidelines for Graduate Students in the Department of Geography (P. 62)

Appendix 1: FASS Checklist for Working Relationship between Thesis Advisor and Research Student

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

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

1. Appointment of Thesis Advisor(s)

Broad Outline of Research Topic

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

Thesis advisor: I agree to supervise _____ as a candidate for the degree of _____ on the topic listed above and understand that any request for change of thesis advisor must be addressed through the department graduate coordinator(s) to the Head of Department, and must be accompanied by explanatory reasons.

It is the responsibility of the department to allocate supervision responsibilities. Where appropriate and feasible, the allocation process should be guided by the principle of freedom of choice, and of willing participants to the thesis advisor-student relationship.

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

2. Supervision Contact Session

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

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

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

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

3. Duties and Responsibilities in the Writing of Theses

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

Thesis advisor: I agree that it is my responsibility to offer adequate supervision and guidance in the research topic and to provide timely feedback on any written work submitted by the candidate at each point of the agreed schedule.

Example of an Agreed Schedule of Work (to be tailored according to specific discipline's requirements)

S/N.	Work to be done	Tentative dates of completion of work
1.	Review of Literature	
2.	Data collection/ Field work	
3.	Analysis of results/Writing	
4.	Completed first draft	
5.	Submission of final draft	

Students are advised to prepare a realistic time-line in consultation with her/him, and ensure that research work keeps to the schedule agreed upon between thesis advisor and student. Students are expected to work on a regular basis, and should not expect the thesis advisor(s) to accommodate last minute reading of drafts or discussions. Thesis advisors will provide academic guidance; warn about weaknesses in design, shaky arguments, poor organization and expression, and so on. However, it is not the responsibility of the thesis advisor to do extensive or elaborate correction, keep track of deadlines, or ensure timely work on the student's part. Ensuring these is the responsibility of the student.

4. Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Student: I have read the Faculty guidelines and warning on plagiarism and agree that it is unethical to submit a thesis which contains plagiarized materials. The thesis is expected to reflect my true competence in every way and that the duties of the thesis advisor do not extend to the rewriting (for style, language or otherwise) of my thesis.

(Where applicable) I have also read the department's ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects.

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

Integrity in research is expected of each graduate student. The Thesis advisor should ensure that each graduate student is given a copy of the guidelines and warning on academic plagiarism. It

is the duty of students to carefully read the guidelines on plagiarism. Thesis advisors are expected to apprise their students of what the Department regards as academic plagiarism, and how to avoid it

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

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

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

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

6. Research Publication Credit and Order of Attribution

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

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

7. Resolution of Conflicts

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

Departments must have clear written guidelines on the proper procedure to follow in the event of a dispute. Full information should be provided to students as to where they may seek advice,

help or counselling. In general, any difficulties encountered by students in getting adequate supervision should be referred in the first instance, to the department graduate coordinator(s), and then to the Head of Department. Any warnings, anxieties, or problems concerning research work that a thesis advisor may have about specific aspects of a student's research work, or issues of academic integrity, should be also made known as early as possible to the graduate coordinator. It is expected that any problem encountered in the thesis advisor-student relation will be addressed by all parties concerned in a mature, temperate and civilized manner.

Name of Thesis advisor(s)

Signature and Date

Name of Student

Signature and Date

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Graduate Studies Committee, Department of Geography, NUS

25 September 2016

Preamble

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

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

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

This document aims to provide a summary of those general guidelines, policies and suggestions that together could be viewed as comprising good thesis advisory practice. The intention is for the document to contribute to a successful student-thesis advisor(s) relationship and facilitate the creative process of research and thesis¹ preparation and submission. The general guidelines have been composed from a range of sources, including documents on good thesis advisory practice that have been made publicly available by highly regarded universities in North America (notably the University of British Columbia, University of Toronto, Victoria University and the University of Pennsylvania). In addition to documents produced by individual universities, the content of this document is also based on information from the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, through its "Guiding Principles for Graduate Student Supervision", published in 2008, and from the Graduate Supervision webpages of the University of Western Ontario, Canada.

The content of this document is intended to complement rather than replace other documents, checklists etc. relating to graduate supervision that are available to graduate research students in the Department.

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

Selection of thesis advisors

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

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

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

PhD students will also have a T.C. The T.C. comprises academics from the Department (and possibly also related disciplines either within or outside of FASS) whose responsibility is to provide independent scrutiny and evaluation of a student's progress as a doctoral researcher, including overseeing their Qualifying Examination (QE). Most TCs comprise three members of faculty, at least two of whom (the main thesis advisor and a co-thesis advisor) are involved directly in supervision.

When selecting a co-thesis advisor, students should feel free to ask about a potential thesis advisor's:

- willingness to supervise;
- research interests;
- previous thesis advisory experience, including the proportion of students who they have supervised who have successfully completed their research degrees without the need for an extension; and
- current thesis advisory load (number of graduate research students currently being supervised).

The main thesis advisor and co-supervision

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

Clarifying expectations

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

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

- Frequency and modes of contact. Are regular meetings required? How often? Who schedules them? Is the student expected to bring a written report, or present orally? Are regular meetings one-on-one or group meetings with other students?

What about informal meetings—is there an “open door” approach or does the student need to book an appointment?

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

- When will the QE take place? Who is responsible for what in the QE?
- What kinds of discussions and decisions can take place between student and thesis advisor(s) about the examination of the thesis?
- What are the health and safety and ethical considerations of the proposed research? Is a Risk Assessment likely to be necessary? Is approval from NUS Institutional Review Board (IRB) likely to be needed? If so, how are Risk Assessments carried out/how is approval from the IRB sought and obtained? When should the process of assessing risk and/or obtaining IRB approval commence?

Responsibilities

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

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

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

journals.

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

Responsibilities of the student include:

- Being proactive in discussing with their main thesis advisor the programme of taught courses that best suit their needs and interests, and how to balance the demands of taught courses and associated assignments with showing progress in their research.
- Becoming familiar with, and keeping to, the rules, policies, and procedures relating to graduate research that are in place in the Department/FASS/NUS.
- Adhering to all deadlines and policies regarding registration, applications for conference and fieldwork funding, leaves of absence, limitations on time, dissertation submission and graduation.
- Being actively involved in research group meetings and seminars in the Department and, if appropriate, outside the Department (e.g. research cluster meetings in FASS, Asia Research Institute etc.). Note that attendance by graduate research students at departmental seminars is regarded as highly desirable; graduate research students are expected to attend departmental seminars irrespective of whether they relate directly to their own research.
- Preparing a research plan and timetable in consultation with the thesis advisor(s) as a basis for the program of study, including any proposed fieldwork.
- Proactively arranging thesis advisory meetings, meeting with the thesis advisor(s) when requested and reporting regularly on progress and results.
- Establishing a TC, with the assistance of the thesis advisor(s), early on in the dissertation stage.
- Keeping thesis advisors informed on how they can be contacted and informing them of any significant changes that may affect the progress of the research.
- Acquiring the necessary health and safety skills and IRB clearance for undertaking the proposed research and adhering to the risk assessment and ethical practices followed in the Department.
- Maintaining good records of each stage of the research.

Cross-cultural issues

Graduate students and faculty in the Department of Geography are from a variety of cultural backgrounds. While this makes for a highly invigorating and diverse working environment, and yields great benefits for research, teaching and social activities in general, misunderstandings may arise from time to time. The risks of misunderstandings can be mitigated, however, and both student and thesis advisor(s) should take note of – and where relevant consider discussing during their meetings – the following in particular:

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

Adapting to a new culture, including the expectations of the discipline, at the same time as getting used to a new university environment, may take time and can be stressful and confusing. Thesis advisors have a responsibility to help mentor their students during this transition, while students should try to identify behaviours that are affected by cultural differences and be prepared to modify them. Potential misunderstandings can often be minimized by strategies such as depersonalising and

anticipating the issue; for example, by thesis advisors saying that they know some students may be uncomfortable asking questions, but questions are expected and welcome.

Problem solving

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

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

Sources of information used in compiling these guidelines are listed in **Appendix C** below.

Appendix A: Checklists for students and thesis advisors

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

Checklist for Students

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

Potential or actual thesis topic.

How and when a Thesis Committee will be finalised (for PhD students only).

Funding.

Applying for scholarships and awards.

Teaching duties.

Availability of space, including laboratory space (if relevant).

Expected hours of work.

Timelines and major milestones, including anticipated completion time.

Nature of thesis advisory guidance.

Frequency and style of meetings.

Who arranges formal meetings, and will a written record of each formal meeting be kept (and if so by who).

Methods of informal communication.

Conventional PhD thesis route, or alternative Articles-based PhD pathway?

Turnaround time for responses to major questions, and comments on drafts of thesis chapters, publications, or conference presentations.

Intellectual property (IP) issues such as authorship on publications, conference presentations.

Health and Safety and Ethical (Institutional Review Board) considerations.

I understand and have discussed with my thesis advisor(s) my program requirements including (not all may be applicable – but please place a tick alongside those topics that have been covered):

Most suitable core courses.

Extra courses. Language/breadth requirement.

Laboratory protocol and training needs.

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

Thesis proposal.

Qualifying Exam.

Departmental seminar and Research Group attendance.

Other (specify).

Checklist for Thesis advisors (main and co-thesis advisors, unless otherwise stated)

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

To establish a collegial environment, I will:

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

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

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

I will undertake the following academic mentoring activities:

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

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

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

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

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

Discuss issues of authorship and intellectual property early in the student's program.

I have discussed funding issues with the supervisee including:

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

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

I have discussed academic program issues with the supervisee including:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Other (specify)

Appendix B: Record sheet for thesis advisory meetings

Graduate Research Student Meetings Record

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

Student name:	(Co-)thesis advisor name:
Degree and year of course: PhD/M Soc Sci Full-time / Year of study Part-time / Year of study	Date & location of supervision meeting:
Working thesis title:	
Points discussed: 1.	
Agreed action points: 1.	
Research activity undertaken/completed since last meeting: •	
Research training needs identified: •	

Student signature:

Date:

(Co-)thesis advisor's signature:

Date:

Appendix C: Useful sources of information

(URLs valid as of September 2016)

Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (2008) Guiding Principles for Graduate Student Supervision.

<http://www.cags.ca/documents/publications/working/Guiding%20Principles%20for%20Graduate%20Student%20Supervision%20in%20Canada%20-%20rvsn7.pdf>

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

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

Office of the Provost (2006) Graduate Supervision. University of Pennsylvania.

http://www.upenn.edu/provost/images/uploads/Graduate_Supervsr_2011.pdf

School of Graduate Studies (2012) Graduate Supervision. Guidelines for Students, Faculty and Administrators. University of Toronto, 2nd Edition.

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

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

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

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

https://www.uwo.ca/tsc/faculty_programs/supervision%20conversations%20.html

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

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

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

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

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

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

Students in the Department of Geography are required to format their submission with the analytical commentary forming the main body of the thesis, together with an appendices comprising full copies of the journal articles.

Other Requirements

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

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

Other Important Points to Note

- Students will have to decide on whether to complete the normal PhD by thesis or one based on articles, latest within a year of passing the PhD QE using an application form available via graduate student portal.
- The same journal article cannot appear in more than one thesis, even if there is equal co- authorship of the article.
- All copyright and permission issues must be resolved prior to uploading of the thesis. As per normal, students have to use the template in the [Electronic Thesis/Dissertation \("Thesis"\) Submission, NUSGS 008/21](#), to seek formal approval with the respective journal editors to reproduce the articles.
- Students can subsequently choose to opt-out of either route, but must do so before the examiners are nominated.

13 Sep 2023

Appendix 4

NUS Geography Graduate Programmes Strategy 2023-2027

BACKGROUND

The Department of Geography established in 1928, is today ranked among the top Geography departments in the world. However, unlike many of the top departments elsewhere, NUS Geography only developed a PhD programme in the 1960s (the first PhD in FASS, awarded in 1970, was a geographer; subsequently Professor emeritus Rodolphe de Konnack, Université de Montréal) and the programme remained small, with less than 10 students entering the PhD programme each year until well into the 2000s. As a top ranked department in a leading global university, Geography at NUS aims to offer a world-class graduate programme that enhances the experiences and professional development of graduate students and provides a solid foundation for future career development.

THE AIM

To build and maintain a graduate programme commensurate with the Department's high international standing and be recognised as the premier place in the world for leading geographical research in Asia.

OBJECTIVES

1. NUS Geography aims to increase the numbers of high-quality PhD and Masters students to numbers commensurate with peer Geography departments around the world.
2. NUS Geography seeks to maintain its current, and develop new, graduate coursework degree programmes that are distinctive and are of international standing.
3. Provide a high-quality graduate student experience characterised by supportive and academically rich and rigorous learning and supervision support; modern learning environments; and a vibrant graduate community.
4. NUS Geography aims to administer its Graduate programmes in a professional and efficient manner consistent with NUS policies and regulations, and ensure appropriate quality controls on academic and administrative processes.

GPS: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Objective	Strategy	Metric
1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review, develop and implement a recruitment strategy to attract and retain high quality graduate students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a recruitment plan. Increase in marketing effort to attract students. Increase in no. applications from highly ranked universities by 2027. Increase admissions from highly ranked institutions.
1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NUS Geography to invigorate existing and investigate and, where appropriate, initiate new joint graduate programmes with other leading universities globally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish joint graduate programmes or partnerships with strategic partner institutions. Increase flow of students between institutions.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the representation of Singaporean citizens and Permanent Residents among the graduate research community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase number of Admissions by Singaporean Students and PR.
3 & 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the MSc Applied GIS continues to meet the highest international standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake external review of the MSc Applied GIS programme. Support departmental efforts to appoint a senior research leader to ensure future leadership of the programme.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to develop additional micro-credentials in GIS including Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma and a stackable pathway to the MSc Applied GIS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit documentation to NUS for approval for a graduate certificate in Applied GIS. Submit documentation to NUS for approval for a graduate diploma in Applied GIS. Successfully launch both programmes by 2024.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore and develop additional and distinctive Masters coursework programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit documentation to NUS for approval for MSc in Climate Change and Sustainability. Submit documentation to NUS for approval for a stackable MSc in Climate Change and Sustainability including both a Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma. Launch the new MSc by 2024.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The experience of the Graduate community will reflect NUS Geography's commitment to a safe, respectful, supportive, and inclusive community, free from harassment and bullying. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate students, faculty and staff are made aware of expected behaviour and responsibilities. Graduate students are aware of the processes and pathway to report concerns or unacceptable behaviour.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a sufficiently broad, challenging and rigorous structured programme of taught courses, comprising subject-specific courses, knowledge and transferable skills, to assist the successful completion of a graduate research student's thesis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review course offerings on a tri-annual basis to ensure the necessary mix of knowledge and skills are able to be accessed by students.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a high-quality suite of graduate coursework courses for the MSc in Applied GIS and new MSc in Climate Change and Sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and implement a plan for external review of graduate coursework programmes on a 5-year basis.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide high-quality learning environments including access to study space and laboratory facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a space policy for study space. Review physical study space requirements on an annual basis Ensure graduate students are aware of the space policy.

4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist Graduate Students in accessing funding support throughout their candidature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of Geography faculty to seek additional support for graduate students in the Department from both within and outside the university. [increase resources Evidence
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist students in preparing for post university opportunities in academia and industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage research groups to organize workshops for students in their final years to identify and prepare for appropriate field-specific academic opportunities. Organize regular alumni interaction fora to update current students on current and evolving employment opportunities in the industry and quasi-academic research organizations.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GSC receives regular updates on amendments to regulations and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes are shared with GSC during scheduled committee meetings.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GSC to maintain regular communications with the FASS Graduate Office. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate representatives of GSC attend all FASS graduate co-ordinator meetings.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GSC to deliberate and ensure timely decisions in order to comply with NUSGS and FASS timelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet all FASS and NUSGS internal deadlines.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examination processes are implemented in a fair and timely manner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that thesis examinations involve external examination where appropriate and necessary. Examinations are completed within normal timeframes.

Appendix 5: Graduate student representatives in the Department of Geography, NUS

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

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

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

- 1) Act as advocates for graduate students and graduate student issues in Geography at meetings of the Faculty and departmental Graduate Studies committees. The Representatives are also expected to communicate significant events and policy and practice decisions affecting graduate students back to graduate students in Geography
- 2) Be knowledgeable about departmental and Faculty resources, policies and initiatives
- 3) Host standing meetings³ – preferably on a monthly basis and of an informal nature - with graduate students in Geography through which graduate students can raise relevant issues and can keep updated with regard to changes in policy and practice in the Department/Faculty, departmental/Faculty events such as seminars and research group meetings, and graduate opportunities (including those relating to financial support)
- 4) Participate in discussion of all matters of departmental Graduate Studies Committee business that impact graduate students in Geography, except those related to the evaluation or performance of other graduate students
- 5) Respect the privacy of students who come to the representative in his/her official GPAacity.

³ Meetings that are held at approximately the same time of day on the same day of the week

Appendix 6: Information on the PhD Qualifying Exam

10 November 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

Departmental policy is to accept only those PhD students whose proposed research topics can be adequately advised by existing faculty members.

All PhD students in the Department will have two Advisors: one Main Advisor, usually chosen before or at the latest upon arrival, and one Co-Advisor. **The Co-Advisor should be from within the Department and should be appointed within the first 6 months of the candidature.** The Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee and the Department Administrator (Pauline Lee) should be informed about this appointment via email, within the same time frame.

To attempt the PhD Qualifying Examination (QE), a Thesis Committee that also includes a Third Committee Member must be formed at the latest by the end of the third semester. Please refer to Section 2.3 on the formation of the Committee.

All PhD graduate students should have the risk assessment discussed with their Advisors and the necessary documentation completed, prior to attempting their PhD QE and prior to their fieldwork. This applies to local and overseas field trips. Note, completing safety and risk documentation prior to fieldwork also applies to Master's students.

The date of the QE is typically set at the same time as when students submit their research proposal and reading list for QE.

The risk assessment workflow and assessment are found on our website [Department of Geography – NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences](#) via a link on the landing page ([Safety & Health @ Geography](#)), or directly from <https://nusu.sharepoint.com/teams/SafetyCompass>. The “**Checklist for Field Research**” serves as reminder for students to complete certain tasks before embarking on a field trip. Please submit a copy of the completed list to Pauline together with the proposal and reading list for QE. This is to ensure everyone uses this resource to minimise safety and health risks and to ensure compliance with NUS requirements.

2. STUDENTS AND THEIR ADVISORS

2.1. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PHD STUDENTS

Responsibilities of PhD students include:

- taking responsibility for their own research and personal and professional development;
- selecting one Co-Advisor, within the first 6 months, to complement the disciplinary breadth of the Advisory Committee and enrich the student's scholarly journey during their PhD;
- maintaining frequent and regular contact with their Advisors: meetings with the Advisors should take place no less than twice a semester;
- preparing adequately for meetings with their Advisors and the Thesis Committee;

- setting and keeping to timetables and deadlines, including planning and submitting required work and generally maintaining satisfactory progress within their programme of research;
- making their Advisors aware of any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect their work;
- attending to any development opportunities (research-related and other) that have been identified when agreeing to their development needs with their Advisors;
- adhering to NUS's regulations and policies regarding research degree programmes, including policies and guidelines on health and safety, insurance, intellectual property, ethical research conduct and academic misconduct; and
- contributing fully to relevant activities in the Department and more broadly within NUS, including meetings organised by the Department's Graduate Student Representatives, research seminars, research group meetings (including reading groups) and the annual Geography Graduate Workshop.

2.2 ADVISORS AND SUPERVISION

The Main Advisor is the official personnel appointed to handle requests by the PhD students (e.g. for signing off on conference fund applications, etc.). Other than this, and unless circumstances dictate otherwise, joint Advisors (Main and Co-Advisor) are expected to have contributed equally to the advice of a student over their period of research (including completion of their thesis).

Although Advisors may encourage their students to seek advice on particular academic topics from other colleagues, Advisors have the primary responsibility for directing the research to a satisfactory conclusion. It is therefore crucial that Advisors approve the general content and planning of the research and agree with their students on a schedule of Advisory meetings. The Main Advisor is responsible for completing the Advisor-Student checklist provided, to be completed within the first semester of enrolment.

In general, when a student encounters difficulties in obtaining adequate guidance, they should approach their Advisors first. In the second instance, the matter should be referred to the Department Graduate Coordinator (Chair) or the Deputy (or his/her delegate) and, if needed, subsequently the Head of Department. Any warnings, anxieties, or problems concerning research work that an Advisor may have about specific aspects of a student's research work, or issues of academic integrity, should also be made known as early as possible to the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee or the Deputy Chair. The aim is to address any problems encountered in the Advisor-Student relationship confidentially in a timely and respectful manner.

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

2.3 THESIS COMMITTEE

The Thesis Committee provides additional support and guidance to PhD students in Geography. The principal purposes of the Thesis Committee are to review the progress of a student's research programme and professional development, to supplement, where

appropriate, the advice and guidance given to the student by the Advisors, and to grade a student's performance in the Qualifying Examination. If the Thesis Committee is not functioning effectively, a student should, in the first instance and promptly, alert the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee or the Deputy Chair.

The PhD Thesis Committee oversees the candidate's progress until completion. It comprises the two Thesis Advisors and a Third Committee Member from the Department or a faculty member from other Departments or Faculties. The Co-Advisor is preferred to be within the Department to enrich the PhD student's learning experience throughout their studies. The Co-Advisor needs to ensure that they can quickly assume duty on behalf of the Main Advisor should the latter leave NUS employment or be unable to continue with the supervision due to unforeseen circumstances. The Co-Advisor shares advisory responsibilities with the Main Advisor. The Third Committee Member can be external (outside of NUS), provided he/she is committed and will remain reachable. The PhD student should discuss the Third Committee Member with their Advisors before they are selected, at the latest by the end of the third semester.

In certain circumstances, and by mutual agreement between the Advisors and the PhD student, the Third Committee Member can be elevated to the status of Co-Advisor, to formally recognise their contributions that exceed their standard duties.

Proposed changes to the Thesis Committee must be discussed with the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee or the Deputy Chair.

3. PhD QUALIFYING EXAMINATION (QE)

All PhD candidates are expected to complete and pass the PhD **Qualifying Examination (QE)** before they begin their fieldwork.

For planning purposes, candidates should notify the Department Administrator (Pauline Lee) of their preferred date of completion of the QE, so that Pauline can work out a feasible schedule for each student for further discussion with the Thesis Committee. The Department recommends that the QE be conducted no later than the 20th month of candidature.

The PhD QE comprises the following two components:

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

The **Comprehensive Examination (CE)** is a written exam that tests the general competence and disciplinary awareness of the candidate. The **Oral Examination (OE)** provides an opportunity for a more in-depth questioning of a student's competence as an early-stage researcher and the feasibility and merit of their PhD thesis proposal. Refer to Item 3.4 for more details.

3.1 TIMEFRAME TO ATTEMPT THE QE

Faculty's recommendations

The QE should be **passed within the first two years** of the PhD candidature. Within this period, a second PhD QE may be attempted should the candidate fail at the first attempt. This applies to both full-time and part-time candidates. For research scholars, the scholarship will only be suspended upon the recommendation of the Department.

A student who is unable to pass the PhD QE by the end of the second year of their candidature may be downgraded to the Master's programme if he/she has shown sufficient progress to complete a Master's thesis. For research scholars, the scholarship will be terminated in such cases.

Department's recommendations

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

3.2 ELIGIBILITY TO ATTEMPT THE QE

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

- Have completed a minimum of 5 courses (excluding NG5001 & NG5002) with a minimum GPA of 3.5;
- Completed the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) online course; and
- Where applicable, obtained satisfactory grades (at least grade C) in the CELC graduate English module at intermediate level.

3.3 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE QE

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

Advisors should always be consulted for advice on scholarly directions and decisions.

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

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

The Thesis Committee monitors the half-yearly online progress of the candidate for their entire candidature. Only the main Advisor of the candidate can submit the remarks online. However, other members of the Thesis Committee should be consulted on the comments

made by the Main Advisor. Therefore, the Main Advisor should make sure that the comments and evaluation submitted reflect the agreed views of the Thesis Committee.

The Thesis Committee decides on the details of the content of the CE, in terms of the total number of questions, their focus, and their scope. However, three questions should be set as specified below (see Section 2.1). The Thesis Committee should also decide upon the standard of answers regarded as acceptable, while keeping in mind that any shortcomings in a student's performance in the CE can be addressed in the OE.

The OE remains the primary opportunity for a student to defend their proposed PhD research to the Thesis Committee. The OE also provides the Committee with an opportunity to examine in more detail a student's responses in the CE examination, in addition to questions about their proposed area of research. A student with a CE performance deemed substandard should be informed in advance that they can expect to be questioned in depth about their CE performance at the OE. In such cases, the OE provides a student with an opportunity to redress an unsatisfactory performance in the CE.

In addition, the Thesis Committee is also responsible for the nomination of Examiners for the thesis. The identities of the Examiners are not to be made known to the candidate at that stage.

3.4 [COMPONENTS OF THE PHD QE](#)

3.4.1 COMPREHENSIVE EXAM (CE)

- The CE is completed before the OE.
- The candidate must submit a bibliography of literature (i.e. reading list) relevant to their proposed research of ca. 20-30 titles together with a short (ca. 500 words) summary of their research at least 6-8 weeks before their scheduled OE. This is to help the Thesis Committee decide on the content of the CE, and in particular sections 1) Conceptual and theoretical framings and 2) Methods and methodology (see Format below).
- The CE comprises a single examination produced and marked by all members of the Thesis Committee. Students are given up to seven days to answer three questions. The examination is "take home", with students allowed to use whatever sources of information they would normally use in their research, including, if relevant, online reference search engines (such as Google Scholar). Responses to questions are to be produced in digital form. Students will be asked to guarantee that their CE responses were their own work and are expected to correctly reference the sources of information referred to in their responses (see Section 4 on Plagiarism/Academic Misconduct). Examiners will be able to use plagiarism-checking software if there is any doubt. Students are expected to take the CE *in addition* to their other responsibilities as research students.

Scope of CE

The Thesis Committee decides the scope of the CE. Questions on the CE normally cover a student's chosen area of research. Other questions might be more general and require the

student to address, for example, the broader context for a student's research, ethical considerations, health and safety, the politics of science, the roles of theory and observation, and the contribution that research makes to society. A student could also be expected to refer not only to information in the published realm but also material covered in a seminar, workshop, conference presentation, or reading group meeting they have attended.

Format of Examination

<u>Descriptions</u> <i>Number of exam papers</i>	<u>Number of days given</u> One
<i>Duration</i>	Seven days (maximum). This is a "take-home" exam and therefore not subject to invigilation or limits on sources of information utilised. Students can submit their answers before the seven days have passed if they so wish.
<i>Number of questions given</i>	Up to six. The Thesis Committee may decide to provide students with a set of questions to choose from.
<i>Number of questions to be answered</i>	Three
<i>Form of answers</i>	The answers must be typed using a word processor and submitted in digital form. The three answers in total MUST NOT exceed 6000 words (including references, figure captions and tables, etc). No answer to be longer than 3000 words in total (including references, figure captions and tables, etc.). Answers should combine evidence of depth of understanding with an indication that a student has a good awareness of the broader context.
<i>Structure of exam paper</i>	A total of three sections. Students must answer all three sections.

The three sections (and their respective scope) are:

- (i) Conceptual and theoretical framings: To cover, for example, links with broader topics or ongoing challenges in Geography, theoretical approaches, and conceptual positioning;
- (ii) Methods and methodology: To cover, for example, methodological frameworks, techniques of data collection (including fieldwork) and analysis, ethics and positionality; and
- (iii) Wider debates: To cover, for example, current and related major research questions in the discipline, the role of research in society (e.g. policy implications), and new developments in related areas of research.

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

3.4.2 ORAL EXAM (OE)

- The OE is taken after the CE.
- Whether the candidate can take the OE is not dependent on the performance of the CE. Pass/Fail for the QE will be based on BOTH the OE and CE components. Only the final grade for the QE (i.e. Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory) needs to be submitted.
- The candidate is to submit a thesis proposal and reading list 6-8 weeks before the date of the OE in order to give the Thesis Committee enough time to read and frame questions. The word count for the thesis proposal is between 5,000 to 10,000 words using 12 font size with double spacing. This word count excludes bibliography, tables, figures and end notes. The Thesis Committee members are urged to read the proposal carefully before the OE in order to be fair to the candidate.
- The OE will be conducted by the Thesis Committee and a Chair to be appointed from within the Graduate Studies Committee or another faculty member.

4. PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Candidates are reminded that plagiarism/academic misconduct, including failure to declare and specify AI use, is a serious offence at NUS. Students should follow the Department's Guidelines.

Appendix 7: Teaching Guidelines for Graduate Students in the Department of Geography

14 March 2013

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

What kind of work does 'teaching contact time' refer to?

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

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

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

Will preparation time be counted towards my hours of work?

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

What other duties may I be expected to perform?

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

- Marking student CA assignments
- Calculating marks for tutorial/practical sessions
- Collating overall CA marks
- Photocopying course-related materials
- Returning graded assignments to students
- Setting up apparatus for lab/practical sessions
- Helping to maintain safety and order in the Geolab through routine checks
- Exam invigilation
- Marking up to 50% of exam scripts

What can I do to make sure that I contribute effectively and efficiently?

- Ensure that you understand the expectations of the lecture(s) that you have been assigned to assist. Ask for clarification if there is any uncertainty.
- Check to ensure that your schedule permits you to carry out the duties assigned to you. If your schedule does not fit with assigned work, please discuss possibilities for rearrangement with the lecturer and other students (if any) allocated to the course.
- Familiarize yourself with the CANVAS site for the course(s) in which you are involved, and make sure that you are listed on the relevant site(s).
- If you are in-experienced in conducting tutorials or practical sessions, make sure that you observe in advance at least one session conducted by a more experienced student to see how things should be done.
- Make sure that you attend lectures that are relevant to your own duties – whether that be as preparation for direct teaching contact time or in terms of assignment/examination marking.
- In the case of physical geographers, ensure that you understand the use and maintenance of equipment, and setting up apparatus for practicals as needed by course lecturers. These will both entail liaising with the relevant lab manager(s).
- In cases where you have been assigned exam invigilation duties, it is compulsory for you to attend a briefing organized by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Information about this briefing will be emailed to you by the FASS Dean's office.
- Try to be flexible and mindful that these duties provide opportunities to gain experience of a diverse range of aspects of academic working life.

How will my performance be evaluated?

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

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

- The coordinator for the course(s) to which you have been assigned.
- At Department level, Pauline Lee: geoleepl@nus.edu.sg
- At Faculty level, Susan Khoo: faskhoos@nus.edu.sg