

University of Victoria

School of Earth and Ocean Sciences

Graduate Handbook

Last updated: August 2024

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1. Administration of the SEOS graduate program

Faculty and students are bound by policies set by the University of Victoria (UVic), the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS), and the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences (SEOS). FGS policies are given in the Graduate Calendar and in policy documents found on the [FGS webpages](#). In particular, students and faculty members should read the [Graduate Supervision Policy](#), which outlines the rights and responsibilities in the supervisory relationship.

In SEOS, the graduate program is overseen by the Graduate Committee, which is chaired by a faculty Graduate Advisor, and typically includes several other faculty members, all appointed by the SEOS Director, and two graduate student representatives.

The Graduate Committee is collectively responsible for discussing issues concerning the graduate program and making recommendations to the SEOS Departmental Committee. Faculty members on the Committee work with the Departmental Secretary to allocate UVic Graduate Fellowships ahead of each new academic year (Section 8.3) and they make recommendations to FGS for UVic Graduate Entrance Awards, and BC Graduate Scholarships. Faculty members on the Committee also review SEOS graduate student applications for NSERC Post-graduate Scholarships (Section 8.5), and UVic Donor Awards (Section 8.6), making recommendations to the university committees that oversee these awards.

The Graduate Advisor is responsible for chairing meetings of the Graduate Committee and acts as an advocate for the graduate students at the faculty level. They also serve as an ombudsperson if conflict arises between a graduate student and their supervisor. They arrange Chairs for SEOS candidacy exams (Section 5

- The [Ombuds Office](#), an independent, impartial, and confidential resource for undergraduate and graduate students and other members of the University of Victoria community. The ombudsperson helps resolve student problems or disputes fairly.

2. Graduate student supervision

2.1. Supervisors and co-supervisors

The primary academic supervisor is your main source of guidance on all matters relating to your studies and research in SEOS. If appropriate, a graduate student may also have a maximum of one co-supervisor. Primary supervision by adjunct faculty or faculty in other departments is permissible, but in this case a regular faculty member from SEOS must serve as co-supervisor.

Students are advised to familiarize themselves with both their own and their supervisor's responsibilities by reading this Handbook, the information on the [SEOS Current Students webpages](#), and in the [FGS Graduate Supervision Policy](#) document.

2.2. Supervisory committee

The supervisory committee plays an important role in guiding your studies and research in SEOS and notifies the student of University expectations concerning the quality, volume, style, and presentation of the thesis. If progress towards the degree is not satisfactory, the committee can recommend to the FGS corrective steps or withdrawal. All changes in programs, or difficulties encountered in completing programs, are to be reviewed first by the supervisory committee. The committee also participates in the student's final oral examinations and Ph.D. candidacy examinations.

2.2.1. Nomination and make-up of the supervisory committee

The supervisory committee is formed by consultation between the student and supervisor, and must be settled upon within the first two terms (eight months) of the program. The student is responsible for informing the Graduate Advisor and Departmental Secretary of the proposed committee composition. Any subsequent changes to that composition must also be reported to the Graduate Advisor and Departmental Secretary. The following rules outline the make-up of supervisory committees.

M.Sc. program: at least **three** members, including:

- a primary or co-supervisor from SEOS faculty, *excluding* adjunct faculty.
- at least one other SEOS faculty or adjunct faculty member.

Ph.D. program: at least **four** members, including:

- a primary or co-supervisor from SEOS faculty, *excluding* adjunct faculty.
- at least one other SEOS faculty or adjunct faculty member.
- at least one outside member who is not a member of the SEOS faculty or adjunct faculty. Faculty members who are jointly appointed between SEOS and other departments may only be the outside member by permission of the Dean of Graduate Studies, which is rarely granted.

Faculty from other institutions, government scientists, or industry scientists with appropriate experience and credentials may all serve on supervisory committees, including as the outside member of a PhD committee. They must be assigned a UVic ID number and then appointed by SEOS to the FGS Faculty Membership List (FML). The primary supervisor is responsible for initiating this process with the SEOS office during formation of the student's committee.

2.3. Expected meeting frequency

2.3.1. With your supervisor

While the FGS indicates that the minimum frequency of meeting (in person, virtual, or through detailed correspondence) should be twice a term, SEOS recommends a minimum of monthly contact to discuss program progress and weekly is preferable. Delays due to field work, remote study, supervisor or student vacation, sick leave, etc. can be expected.

2.3.2. With your supervisory committee

Students must meet with their entire supervisory committee at least once per year throughout the period of study. It is the responsibility of the SEOS supervisor to ensure that these meetings happen in a timely manner. The purpose of committee meetings is dual: 1) to ensure timely degree completion via well-defined projects with specific objectives at each reporting period and 2) to provide a regular opportunity for the committee to provide specific research advice. The student begins, the supervisor completes, and everyone signs the [committee meeting report](#) following the procedure below.

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2.4. Expected turnaround time for comments on a thesis, dissertation proposal, or dissertation

When giving supervisory committee members work to read (e.g., a thesis, dissertation proposal, or dissertation or sections thereof), you should ensure they have enough time to read the work, ideally substantially before any deadlines, in case revisions are required. SEOS suggests that it is the responsibility of committee members to provide feedback after 2 weeks, except in extenuating circumstances or by further negotiation. Ensuring your supervisor and/or supervisory committee know when to expect to receive such documents, and any associated deadlines, will help ensure the best chance of timely turnaround.

2.5. Supervisor and committee member absences

Under FGS guidelines, if the primary academic supervisor takes a leave of absence from the University for six months or more, an interim supervisor must be appointed. If another committee member (other than the primary supervisor) is absent for twelve months or more, an interim member must be appointed. In either circumstance, the student, the FGS, the Graduate Advisor, and the Departmental Secretary must be notified in writing. Written notification of any change in the original structure of the supervisory committee must also be given to the Graduate Advisor, the

minimum of 4.5 units of graduate or upper-level undergraduate coursework (i.e., 3 courses as UVic courses are typically 1.5 units each), which must include EOS 525 Research Frontiers in Earth and Ocean Sciences (1.5 units). The M.Sc. thesis (EOS 599) makes up the remaining units.

All M.Sc. students are also required to present their research at the annual Graduate Student Workshop once during their degree program. Normally this is held during the Reading Break in Fall Term; students typically present during their second year in the program.

3.1.1. EOS 599 M.Sc. thesis

The thesis requirement applies to all Master's students in the School. Students must enroll in EOS 599 in their first term and remain enrolled until their thesis requirements have been completed. The thesis must be defended in a final oral examination (see Section 6).

3.2.

The student must formally request the transfer with a letter to their supervisor. This letter should

week class in fall term joint with the undergraduate SCIE 201. Interested students should contact the SEOS Co-op Coordinator as soon as possible. Often, graduate students secure their own work placements through direct contact with employers, colleagues, or through their supervisor's contacts. Inform the SEOS office and Graduate Advisor as soon as possible when you have planned a work term, as we can hold your UVic Fellowship (FGS allocation funds) to a future term if we know soon enough.

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amount is made by the supervisor. Research assistantship stipends are usually paid in monthly instalments.

Normally, expenses incurred as part of the student's research are also paid by a research grant or contract held by the supervisor. There is no direct SEOS funding support for graduate student research expenses; everything from photocopying to long distance telephone calls must be paid from research grants or personal resources.

8.2. Teaching assistantships

Appointments are available for qualified students to work as teaching assistants (TA's) in laboratory classes or as markers for non-laboratory courses. A single competition for positions for the Fall, Spring, and Summer terms is generally held in June/July each year; students will be advised when and how to apply by

