

Graduate Student Guide: How to Thrive in Grad School

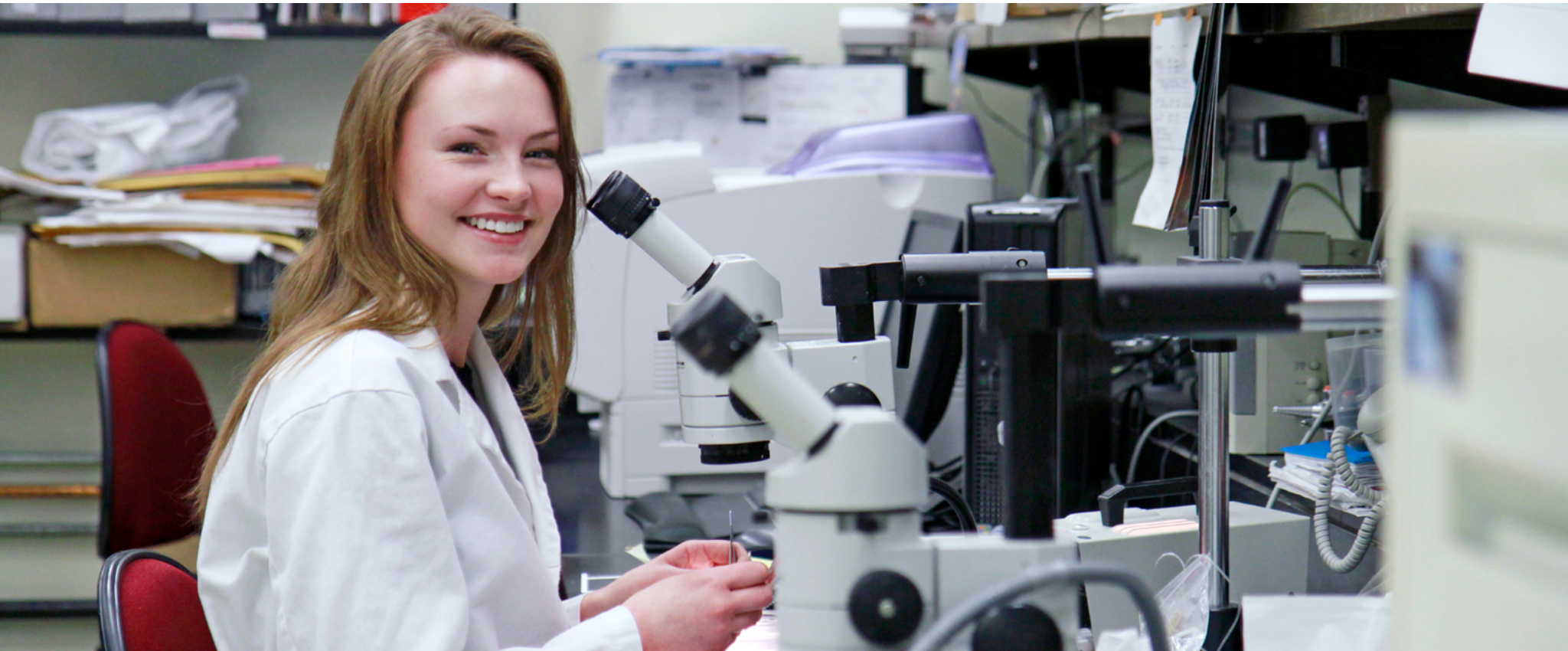


UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Contents

Introduction	2
The Faculty of Graduate Studies: Your Support Base	4
Our Focus: Your Success	4
Funding	5
Academic Support and Professional Development	6
Academic Advising for Graduate Students	7
Leadership	8
What is Involved in Being a Grad Student?	9
Expectations	10
Time Management	10
Research and Writing	11
Supervisor/Supervisory Relationship	13
Health and Wellness	14
Forms and Documents	16
Online Resources	17
Other Resources for Starting Out	18

Introduction



Welcome to the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Calgary.

As a graduate student, you'll be involved in the exciting process of conducting original and important research. UCalgary grad students are known for their enthusiasm and the energy they bring to their field of study. You are an integral part of the research process at UCalgary and your success is our priority.

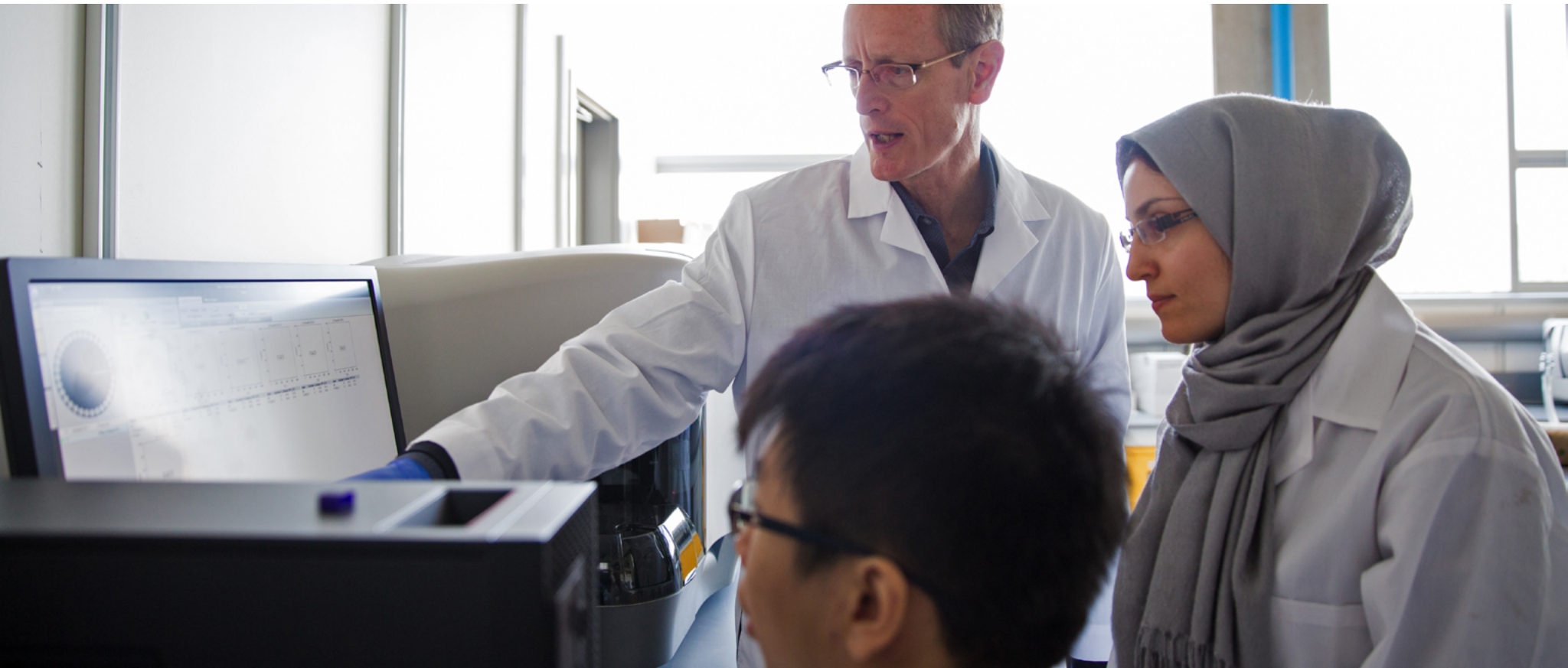
This guide will walk you through the expectations and demands at the graduate level and you'll discover the critical role you play in the academic system and culture on campus, as well as the services and resources that we offer to help meet the demands of grad school.

Your graduate education will build on the knowledge you gained as an undergrad except now you will focus on a specific area and carry out in-depth research or study, with the chance to work with some of the top minds in your chosen field. Expect many challenges along the way but also plenty of excitement as you get to explore and a whole new level of research and discovery.

**FOR FALL 2020,
GRAD STUDIES
HAS PREPARED AN
INFORMATION PAGE
AND A FAQ PAGE ON
HOW THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC AFFECTS
GRADUATE STUDENTS.**

At UCalgary, you will find that you are surrounded by a strong network made up of faculty, staff and peers. But, it is your level of engagement within your new community that will have the most positive influence on your future for years to come. By using the services developed for you and finding opportunities to give back, you will be able to make the most of your time as a grad student. This guide will introduce you to the services, people and resources to help you do just this.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies: Your Support Base



The Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) is here to help you reach your academic and professional goals. Take advantage of the large number of student workshops when applying for scholarships, planning your thesis, or talk to our academic advisor to help answer your questions. FGS is your support base, ready to do what it takes to ensure that you are thriving every step of the way.

Our Focus: Your Success

Whether you're looking for work in academia, in the private or public sectors, we want you to be prepared. Our primary concerns are your student and academic experience. We take a holistic approach, bearing in mind everything that can influence your well-being and achievements.

Here's a breakdown of our services and programs:

Funding

We offer a variety of scholarships and awards through the FGS Scholarship Office to support your research. As a graduate student, you may be eligible for several funding options, which you can find by speaking with your supervisor and through the [Graduate Awards Database](#). Our database allows students to search the hundreds of awards managed by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and find opportunities they are eligible for. See our page on [how to use the awards database](#) to get the best results.

When planning to apply for awards, have a look at our [Award Timeline](#). This online tool will help you anticipate upcoming deadlines for major awards well in advance so that you can get started early with enough time to prepare a great application. Our timeline also identifies the scholarships that are open to international students.

Grad studies has also put together a series of workshops to introduce to you to the different types of awards that are available. You will learn how these are administered, where the funding comes from, how and most importantly how to prepare an award application for the best results.

Grad students from [The Graduate Leaders Circle](#) (GLC) will be available at the workshops to coach you through writing your application. Members of the GLC hold either a Vanier or a Killam scholarship, two of the most prestigious awards at the University of Calgary and in Canada. Their advice in these workshops has been essential in helping more grad students at UCalgary earn national scholarships.

If your award application is successful, our webpage on [Important Funding Information](#) will help you understand where your funding comes from, your responsibilities and how and when you will receive your payments. If you still have questions, the Scholarship Office has the expertise to answer any awards related questions. You can contact them by emailing gsawards@ucalgary.ca, or if you have a question concerning a specific award, you can find a specialist for that award by using our [Award Contact page](#).



**GRAD STUDIES
HAS ALSO PUT
TOGETHER A SERIES
OF WORKSHOPS TO
INTRODUCE TO YOU TO
THE DIFFERENT TYPES
OF AWARDS THAT ARE
AVAILABLE.**

Resources

Award workshops

- [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#)
- [Student Success Centre](#)

Online resources

- [Award Timeline](#)
- [Graduate Awards Database](#)
- [How to use the Graduate Awards Database](#)
- [Tips for Success](#)
- [Important Funding Information - Thesis-based](#)
- [Important Funding Information - Course-based](#)

Contact

- [Scholarship Office](#)
- [Award Contacts](#)

Academic Support and Professional Development

Need to improve your writing, prepare for a conference, or prep for an interview? My GradSkills has the connections to help you.

My GradSkills works with partners both on and off campus to bring you workshops on a variety of topics. These workshops are grouped into Transferable Skills, such as “Research”, “Communications”, “Leadership”, “Career Building,” etc. See our [My GradSkills page](#) for upcoming workshops in each area.

Our program also has a number of professional development resources such as an [Internships program](#) to help you plan and prepare for your career after graduation. A unique [Entrepreneurship](#) program is also available to grad students from all disciplines who dream of turning their research into a business or service.

Check out the [My GradSkills](#) website to find out more about our workshops and professional development.

Resources

Online resources

- [Starting Grad School](#)
- [Mid-Program Grad School](#)
- [Preparing to Graduate](#)

Workshops

- [Workshop Calendar](#)
- [Workshops listed by skill area](#)
- [Career Services](#)

Professional Development

- [Internships](#)
- [Entrepreneurship](#)

Academic Advising for Graduate Students

Our Academic Advisor is your first point of contact for any academic questions or issues that you may encounter. If they can't help you, they'll be able to refer you to another campus service that can. For international students, transitioning to a university in a new country is a big step with its own unique challenges and our specialist is here to provide the advice or referrals that you need.

Our academic specialist will also be available to help you navigate your new environment and ensure that you have someone to help open barriers and offer you the tools and opportunities to excel in your work.

Contact our [Graduate Academic Specialist](#) for more information or to make an appointment.



Leadership

If you've cleared a few of your own hurdles as a grad student, the experience and knowledge you've accumulated could help other students. You can give back by participating in the [Mentorship Program](#) or through [International Students Services](#). Both programs have many opportunities to engage as a student leader or you could consider joining the [Graduate Students' Association](#) to become an advocate for your peers within the university community.

FGS established the [Graduate Leaders Circle \(GLC\)](#), a group of scholars that is composed of our [Vanier Doctoral Scholars](#), [Izaak Walton Killam Doctoral Scholars](#) and the Graduate Students' Association President.

The goal is to develop a community for our Scholars and to support their individual and collective development and student experience. This group participates in mentoring grad students to successful award applications through workshops and coaching. The GLC is an investment in our very best student scholars and future leaders and this benefits the graduate population as a whole. If you would like to join this group, you can through a successful [Vanier](#) or [Killam](#) scholarship application.

**YOU CAN GIVE BACK
BY PARTICIPATING
IN THE MENTORSHIP
PROGRAM
OR THROUGH
INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS SERVICES.
BOTH PROGRAMS HAVE
MANY OPPORTUNITIES
TO ENGAGE AS A
STUDENT.**

What is Involved in Being a Grad Student?

You may find academic expectations at the graduate level different from what you were used to as an undergrad. This section may also be useful to grad students who have been in their program for some time, as it will clarify what is expected of you, what you can expect from your program and supervisor and where to find help if you need it.

Here's what you can expect from your program, supervisor, classmates, and community:

- ✓ **You are responsible for your progress throughout your program** and there will be limited check-ins. Keep deadlines, forms, and requirements in order and track your progress to avoid unpleasant surprises. As you also must work on your thesis and research out of class, time management is critical.
- ✓ If your program involves taking classes, **you may find that classes are more discussion-oriented, involve a larger amount of reading, and have heavier workloads than what you're used to.** There'll also be fewer lectures and more open conversations. Prepare for discussions before class to ensure you'll be able to take an active role in the conversation. We recommend joining a study groups for just this reason.
- ✓ **Your program will take you out of your comfort zone** and you'll need to be flexible to adapt to new situations and tasks. Whenever you're unsure, just ask, and don't be afraid to get creative with your work. Keep your motivation high by seeking new learning opportunities, through the workshops and clinics designed to help you get the most out of your program and enhance your skills.
- ✓ Finally, **no matter what is going on around you, it's always a good idea to remain professional.** You'll be interacting with fellow researchers, faculty, and community members, individuals who could be future employers or coworkers. Keep everyone on your side with a well-honed sense of tact and diplomacy.

If all of this seems overwhelming, keep in mind that you earned your spot in your graduate program, beating out many other students. You have demonstrated that you have the ability to think critically and prioritize effectively, which is why your faculty and the university chose to invest in you.

Expectations

All graduate students have an obligation to devote a significant portion of their time and energy to their academic pursuits. This means you'll need to live up to certain expectations.



Time Management

You are in control of your own education and project planning.

Start by determining your milestones and setting deadlines in accordance with your supervisor or program director. You'll be responsible for tracking your progress and meeting these deadlines. Using the [Supervisor-Student Checklist](#), set out the requirements of your program with your supervisor in a written document. This will ensure you're on the same page from the beginning. Complete, sign, and submit this checklist to your Graduate Program Advisor within the first two months of your program.

Take initiative to communicate with your supervisor. Decide early what works best for both of you and create a calendar of meetings and check-ins. You should meet at least once per month, but you can meet much more frequently if it's convenient for both of you.

Notify your supervisor about any special circumstances, external commitments, trips, or illnesses that may impact your progress. A full-time student works an average of 40 hours per week on program-related activities. If your hours may be shortened one week, let your supervisor know as soon as possible.

Attend workshops and courses to improve your skills. UCalgary and FGS have many programs designed for just for this purpose. If your supervisor suggests brushing up on your presentation skills for an upcoming seminar or attending an event to network, check My GradSkills to see if there are upcoming workshops.

Resources

Workshops

- [My GradSkills](#)
- [Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Student Success Centre](#)

Research and Writing

You must carry out all your research to a high standard and gain the necessary skills and knowledge to perform at your best.

Come prepared with all the background knowledge and skills you need for your research. If you lack any essential skills, work on acquiring them immediately. Be open and honest about your abilities—there's little oversight in a graduate program. If you need assistance, don't be afraid to talk to your supervisor.

Apply for funding for your research program and actively check for future funding opportunities. Look through the Graduate Awards Database and visit the Scholarship Office to find out which awards you'd be eligible for and make sure you stay up to date on funding renewal dates and requirements.

If your program involves research on animals or humans, obtain ethics prior to the start of your project. You'll need to report your research results accurately and honestly, upholding ethical norms in methodology and scholarship. Discuss the [Intellectual Property Checklist](#) and university policies regarding intellectual property with your supervisor. For additional information visit our webpage on [academic integrity](#).

**BE OPEN AND HONEST
ABOUT YOUR ABILITIES
— THERE'S LITTLE
OVERSIGHT IN A
GRADUATE PROGRAM.
IF YOU NEED
ASSISTANCE, DON'T BE
AFRAID TO TALK TO
YOUR SUPERVISOR.**

If your graduate research is a collaborative effort, you'll need to acknowledge all contributions by your supervisor and other colleagues in presentations and publications.

You will also be expected to apply for awards:

- All full-time students in graduate degree programs are eligible for awards and financial assistance. This may include Teaching and Research Assistantships, Bursaries, Government or Industry Awards, or Research Grants.
- Applying for scholarships and awards will give you experience writing effective proposals and teach you about the scholarship and grant process, a central feature of academic life.
- Discuss award opportunities with your supervisor and visit the Online Awards Database.
- Study prospective scholarship criteria to find which ones best fit your research, expertise, and experience.

Resources

Academic Integrity

- [Ethics Approval and Biosafety Training](#)
- [Academic Misconduct](#)
- [Intellectual Property](#)
- [Biosafety Training](#)
- [Tri-Council CORE tutorial](#)

Research and writing workshops

- [My GradSkills](#)
- [Student Success Centre](#)



Supervisor/Supervisory Relationship

You're responsible for meeting with your supervisor or supervisory committee on a regular basis. You'll need to report on your progress and results, and, at the same time, you'll have the chance to receive advice and feedback.

During meetings with your supervisor, you can discuss faculty and program requirements, course and program deadlines, your thesis or dissertation style, and any conflicts of interests that have arisen. Report any dates, important information, or areas of conflict in your studies as soon as they occur.

You'll also have the chance to speak about the responsible use of resources and how to obtain additional resources for your research. Your supervisor should be aware of all materials and resources you may need. If you run short of supplies, tell your supervisor before coming to any decisions.

If you receive any conflicting advice or expectations within your supervisory committee, bring the matter to your supervisor. Similarly, if you are not sure how to react to feedback, set up a meeting with your supervisor as soon as possible. Your supervisor is there to guide you and resolve issues.

Work with your supervisor, too, for funding matters. Your supervisor has been through the funding process before and can help you with everything from advice for applications to

choosing the right types of funding and meeting deadlines. If your research is already funded, your supervisor can make sure you've met all the performance standards and deadlines from the funding organization.

Recognize that your supervisor and committee members have other priorities. They are teaching and researching and have obligations that may delay their responses. Schedule meetings early, and clearly outline how you would like to communicate in your Supervisor-Student Checklist. A professional and productive relationship with your supervisor is necessary for success in your research. Resolve conflicts as quickly as possible, seeking outside help and mediation if necessary. The Graduate Program Director will only be involved after you've exerted your best efforts to mediate an issue.

Resources

See our web page on [Supervision](#) for the following guides

- Annual Progress Report
- Student Supervisor Checklist
- Graduate Student best Practices
- Conflict resolution guide

Contacts:

- [Graduate Academic Specialist](#)
- [Student Ombuds](#)

Health and Wellness

At UCalgary, we take the physical and mental health of our students very seriously. On campus, we offer a range of services to help you maintain a healthy lifestyle. However, it's your responsibility to make sure your research environment is safe and free from harassment, discrimination, and conflict. Your research area is a workplace and, just like any other work environment, individuals need to be able to carry out their work in a secure space where they feel accepted.

As a graduate student, you're going to have a heavy workload and many responsibilities. Try to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle outside your research project. There are many campus

services available that promote physical and mental well-being, such as intramural teams and clubs. Maintain interests outside your program, and meet new people at every opportunity!

[The Wellness Centre](#) offers a number of services and events that support physical and mental wellness. The Centre has also developed a range of excellent [online guides and webinars](#) to help with stress, finances, and for achieving social and spiritual wellness among other important topics.

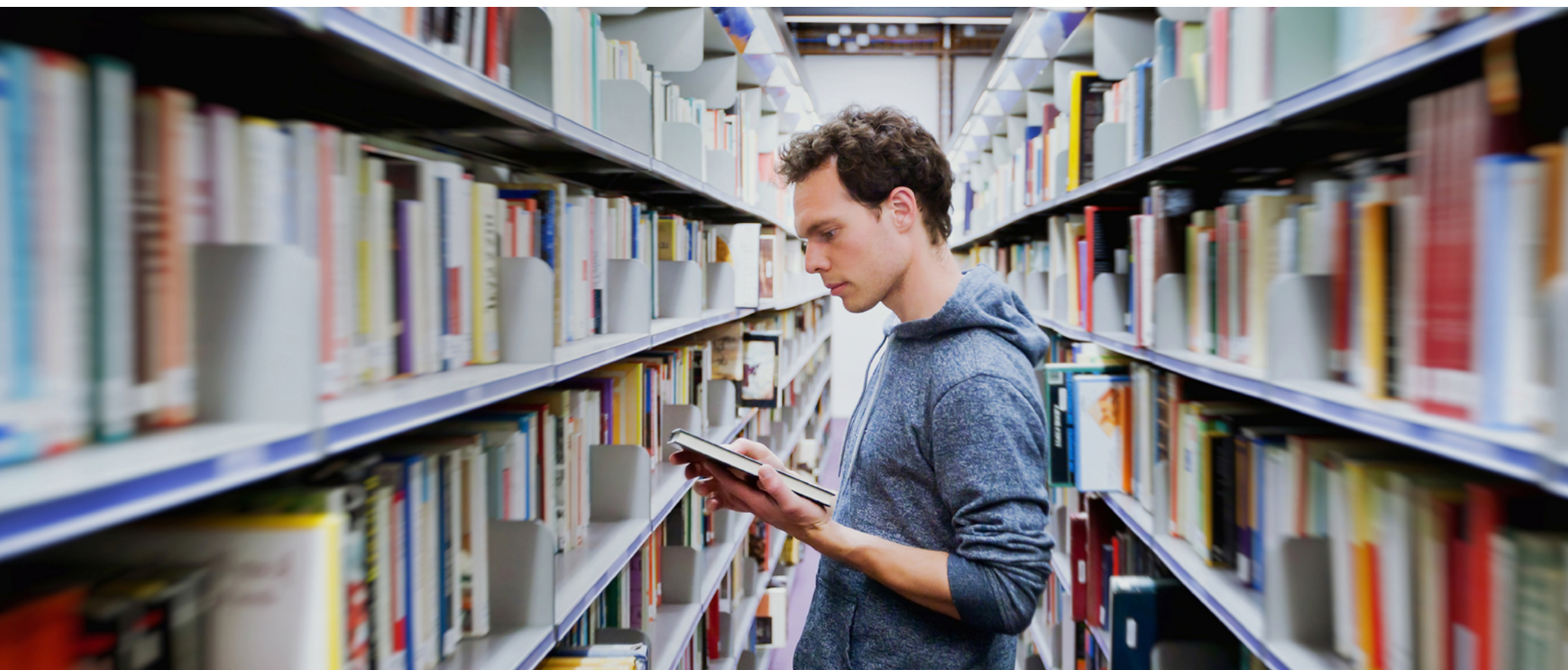
Managing a tight budget is a reality of grad student life. Check out the [Wellness Centre's](#) and the [Welcome Centre's webinars on student finances](#) for creating a student budget. The [Office of the Registrar](#) also offers links to a budget worksheet and a guide for tips on stretching your dollars. As you go through these, keep in mind the unique needs and costs associated with being a grad student.

As a senior member of the collegial environment, you'll need to contribute to campus by being a positive member of the university community. You'll be interacting with undergraduate students, faculty members, and administrative staff on a daily basis. Help us enrich the university experience for everyone at UCalgary.

Resources

- [Wellness Centre](#)
- [Sign up for the Healthy Campus newsletter](#)
- [Welcome Centre](#)
- [Active Living](#)
- [Faith and Spirituality Centre](#)
- [Office of the Registrar: Budgeting](#)

Forms and Documents



Below are a list of common checklists and guides you may need during your graduate program.

Forms and Documents	<u>Best practices for Grad Students Guide.</u>
	<u>Graduate Supervisor-Student Checklist.</u>
	<u>Intellectual Property Checklist.</u>

Online Resources

The following is a list of online resources you may find useful during your graduate studies:

Online Resources

[Grad calendar](#) for important dates and deadlines, program information and academic regulations

[Graduate Awards Database](#)

[Manage My Program](#): Online resource to help manage your registration, deadlines, payments, examinations, convocation and for working with your supervisor.

[My GradSkills](#) for academic and professional development.

[GRADpost](#): Grad student newsletter delivered to your email every Thursday afternoon.

[Student Success Centre](#)

[Graduate Students Association](#): The GSA is the grad student voice on campus and offers funding options and social and academic activities. Watch for their newsletter, News & Views every Tuesday.

[Wellness Centre](#): Offers a number of services to support physical and mental health as well as a broad range of videos and guides that everything from stress to managing your finances.

[Welcome Centre](#)

Contacts

Graduate Academic Specialist: grad.advisor@ucalgary.ca

Student Ombuds: ombuds@ucalgary.ca

Graduate Student Association: ask@gsa.ucalgary.ca

International Student Specialist: international.advice@ucalgary.ca

Other Resources for Starting Out



Here are a few more resources that will help you get started in grad studies.

Getting Started

[eBook: How to Find a Graduate Supervisor](#)

[Money Matters: Research Based Programs](#)

[Money Matters: Professional Programs](#)

[Who to Ask: Grad Student Guide](#)