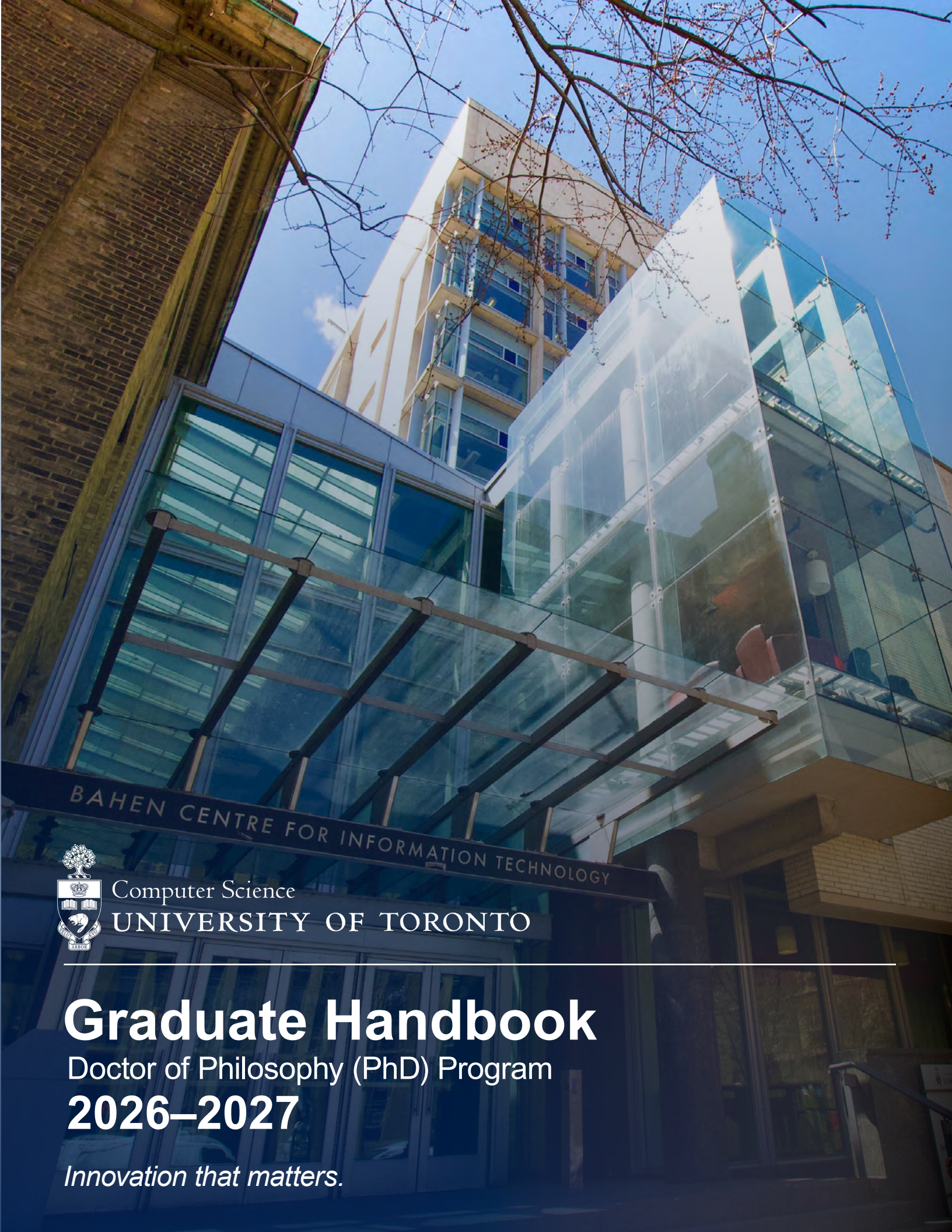




Computer Science
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Graduate Handbook

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Program

2026–2027

Innovation that matters.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Important Dates 2026–27	4
1. What is a PhD?	6
2. PhD Programs in Computer Science	8
3. PhD Course Requirements.....	9
3.1 Minimum number of courses.....	9
3.2 Breadth requirement	9
3.3 Breadth evaluation	11
3.4 Plan of study.....	11
3.5 Courses outside Computer Science	12
3.6 Breadth requirements for students who began prior to September 2024	12
4. PhD Student Supervision	13
4.1 Supervisor	13
4.2 PhD Supervisory Committee.....	14
5. Milestones and Annual Supervisory Committee Meetings	16
5.1 Annual Supervisory Committee meetings	16
5.2 Deadlines for PhD program milestones.....	20
5.3 Use of generative Artificial Intelligence in milestones	22
5.4 Research presentation	22
5.5 Qualifying oral examination.....	23
5.6 Research vision.....	24
5.7 Candidacy	24
5.8 Thesis proposal.....	25
5.9 Departmental Thesis Examination.....	25
5.10 Final Oral Examination at the School of Graduate Studies.....	26
5.11 Graduation.....	28
6. Timelines, Deadlines and (Un)Satisfactory Progress	30
6.1 Time limit to degree completion.....	30
6.2 Deadlines are serious	30
6.3 Unsatisfactory progress	31
6.4 Transferring to the MSc program from the PhD program.....	31
6.5 Withdrawal.....	31
7. Forms, Fees and Administrative Procedures	32
7.1 Adding and dropping courses	32

7.2 Registration and fees	33
7.3 Personal Time Off Policy	35
7.4 Leaves of absence — personal, medical, parental and internship	35
7.5 Appeals.....	37
7.6 University of Toronto Policy for Official Correspondence with Students	38
8. Contact Information and Resources.....	39
Graduate Office	39
Key student resources	40

Important Dates 2026–27

Please see the [School of Graduate Studies Sessional Dates 2026–2027](#) for a complete list. Key departmental dates are listed below.

Fall 2026

Date	Event
June 30	Deadline to request a leave of absence for Fall 2026 session.
July 2	Final day to submit the Final Oral Exam Scheduling Form for Fall convocation without registering for Fall 2026 session.
July 5	Deadline to submit Plan of Study Form for pre-enrolment in Fall and Winter session courses.
July 13	Registration (fee deferral) for Fall session on ACORN begins.
July 14	Final day to submit the Final Oral Exam Scheduling Form for Fall convocation.
Aug. 3	Civic Holiday – University closed.
Aug. 5	Open course enrolment for DCS courses begins for Fall and Winter courses.
Aug. 21	Recommended tuition fee payment deadline. International students must make a payment by this date to ensure UHIP coverage at the beginning of September. Students with a funding package which will cover the ‘minimum payment to register’ may register without payment (tuition deferral).
Aug. 21	Deadline to submit Plan of Study Form for September-start students
Sept. 7	Labour Day – University closed.
Sept. 8	DCS Graduate and cross-listed courses and seminars begin.
Sept. 15	Final date to submit defended and approved doctoral theses to ProQuest to avoid registration and fee payment for 2026-27.
Sept. 18	Registration deadline. After this date a late registration fee will be assessed.
Sept. 23	Final date to add Fall and ‘Y’ courses without an Add/Drop Course(s) Form .
Sept. 28	Final date to submit defended and approved theses to ProQuest for Fall convocation.
Oct. 12	Thanksgiving holiday – University closed.
Oct. 15	Deadline to request a leave of absence for Winter 2027 session.
Oct. 26	Last day to drop Fall courses on ACORN without academic penalty. After this date an Add/Drop Course(s) Form must be submitted.
Oct. 26-30	Reading Week – no classes in some courses. Check with course instructor for details.
Oct. 29	Final day to submit the Final Oral Exam Scheduling Form for March convocation (no ceremony).
Nov. 27	Deadline to submit Plan of Study Form for January-start students
Dec. 11	Last day of classes in Fall session.
Dec. 24	First day of winter break – University closed.

Winter 2027

Date	Event
Jan. 6	University re-opens.
Jan. 11	DCS graduate and cross-listed courses and seminars begin.
Jan. 13	Grades for Fall 2026 session courses available for viewing by students on ACORN .
Jan. 15	Final date to submit defended and approved theses for doctoral degrees to avoid registration and fee payment for the Winter 2027 session.
Jan. 15	Registration deadline for students registering or starting their program in January.
Jan. 18	Final date to add Winter courses without an Add/Drop Course(s) Form .
Jan. 22	Final date to submit final doctoral theses to SGS for March graduation (in absentia).
Feb. 10	Deadline to request a leave of absence for Summer 2027 session.
Feb. 12	Final day to submit the Final Oral Exam Scheduling Form for June convocation.
Feb. 15	Family Day holiday – University closed.
Feb. 15-19	Reading Week – no classes in some courses. Check with course instructor for details.
Feb. 26	Final date to drop Full-Year and Winter courses without an Add/Drop Course(s) Form .
Feb. 26	Deadline to submit Plan of Study Form for PhD-Transitioned students commencing in January.
Mar. 26	Good Friday – University closed.
Apr. 9	Last day of classes in Winter session. Final date to submit defended and approved theses to ProQuest for June convocation.
Apr. 30	Payment deadline to avoid service charges on unpaid Fall/Winter tuition for students registered without full tuition deferral.

Summer 2027

Date	Event
May 3	DCS Graduate and cross-listed courses and seminars begin.
May 10	Final date to enrol in May–June or May–August session courses.
May 12	Grades for Winter 2027 session courses available on ACORN .
May 24	Victoria Day holiday – University closed.
May 31	Final date to drop May-to-June F section courses without academic penalty.
June 21	National Indigenous Peoples Day – University closed.
June 28	Final date to drop May-to-August session Y courses without academic penalty.
July 1	Canada Day – University closed.
July 26	Final date to drop July-to-August section courses without academic penalty.
Aug. 2	Civic Holiday – University closed.



1. What is a PhD?

The main goal of a successful PhD is to train a researcher and prepare them for further professional development. One aspect of this training is to ensure that they have both broad and deep knowledge of Computer Science. The starting point for this aspect is the completion of the PhD course and breadth requirements. However, coursework is, by design, limited to relatively narrow and well-defined assignments, projects and exams.

To be a successful PhD student, a candidate needs a much broader set of skills, including the maturity as a researcher to cope with significantly more uncertainty than is typically seen in coursework. Additional skills include the ability to evaluate the current literature, select promising directions for future work and follow some of those directions through to new contributions. These skills typically develop slowly and continue through to graduation from the PhD program. However, the foundations for these skills should already be in place and evident by the beginning of the second year of PhD studies.

Foundational skills for PhD candidates:

- a. The ability to **apply the basic tools of the field** in potentially new ways, along with understanding what they know and what they have yet to learn.
- b. The ability to **select significant research contributions** from a larger set of published papers and justify that selection (for example, based on the significance of the results or the novelty of the approach).
- c. The ability to **relate the papers to one another**, and to other research in the literature.
- d. The ability to **critique the research methods** used in these papers, including strengths, weaknesses and likely threats to validity, whether these are acknowledged in the papers or not.
- e. The ability to **identify limitations of the results** (and possibly errors) reported in the papers, along with their implications.
- f. The ability to **suggest alternative approaches** to answering the research questions posed in these papers.

- g. The ability to **identify and prioritize lines of investigation for further research**, based on an understanding of significant limitations of the research described in the papers and/or important open problems that the papers fail to answer and on the likelihood of being able to make progress on such issues.

This handbook describes the program requirements for the PhD programs in Computer Science. These requirements are meant to ensure that our students receive regular assessment and feedback on their progress toward these goals and that our graduates meet expectations.



2. PhD Programs in Computer Science

The Department of Computer Science (DCS) offers three PhD programs suitable for students from diverse backgrounds. Students are assigned to one of these PhD programs upon admission. The end result of these programs is the same, namely a PhD in Computer Science.

PHD-EM	PhD-External Master's Students who entered the PhD program after completing a Master's degree in Computer Science (but not in our department) or in a related field.
PHD-T	PhD-Transitioned Students who entered the PhD program after completing the MSc program in our department.
PHD-U	PhD-Direct Entry Students who entered the PhD program directly after completing an undergraduate Bachelor's degree in Computer Science or in a related field.

As described below, the degree requirements vary across these three programs due to differences in the student's prior education.



3. PhD Course Requirements

3.1 Minimum number of courses

The course requirement covers the minimum number of courses required by a degree program. More courses can be taken. PhD-Transitioned and PhD-External Master's students are required to complete at least four graduate half-courses (2.0 Full Course Equivalencies or FCEs) within the first 28 months of their program. Students in the PhD-Direct-entry program must complete at least eight graduate half-courses (4.0 FCEs) within the first 40 months of their program. To obtain credit for a course, students must obtain a mark of B- or higher.

Note: When a graduate course is cross-listed with an undergraduate course, graduate students must enroll in the graduate course to receive credit. Courses offered as pass/fail or CR/NCR will not count towards fulfilling program requirements.

Transfer credits: In some cases, students may reduce the number of courses they are required to complete by requesting transfer credit for graduate courses completed in a graduate program but never used toward another degree. Students may request to transfer up to 1.0 FCE (up to two half-credit courses) using the [Transfer Credit Form](#).

Students who have completed the MSc program in DCS may request that any graduate half-courses completed beyond the MSc course requirement (and taken while registered as an MSc student in DCS) be transferred towards the PhD course requirement.

3.2 Breadth requirement

The breadth requirements ensure that students complete courses from a sufficiently wide range of topics within Computer Science. The PhD breadth requirement depends on a student's program of registration. Only courses on the [List of Approved Courses Eligible for Fulfilling Breadth Requirements](#) when they are taken can be used to satisfy the breadth requirement. This list is updated annually by the

Graduate Affairs Committee. It includes almost all graduate courses taught in our department and a small number of courses offered by other departments on topics that have substantial Computer Science content.

Courses eligible to fulfill breadth requirements are divided into four groups by subject area.

Course groups

Group	Areas
Group 1	Algorithms, Complexity, Cryptography, Theory of Distributed Computing
Group 2	Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Knowledge Representation, Computational Linguistics, Computational Biology and Medicine, Robotics, Vision
Group 3	Systems, Networks, Databases, Security, Programming Languages, Compilers, Software Engineering, Scientific Computing
Group 4	Human Computer Interaction, Computational Social Science, Visualization, Graphics, Sustainability Computing, Computer Science Education

Breadth requirements by program

Program	Requirement
PhD-External Master's	At least five courses on the approved list from at least three different groups. Graduate courses taken during a previous graduate program may be deemed equivalent to courses on the approved list with the permission of the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies.
PhD-Transitioned	At least five courses on the approved list from at least three different groups taken over the Master's and PhD combined.
PhD-Direct Entry	At least five courses on the approved list from at least three different groups.

To satisfy breadth: at least five approved courses, drawn from at least three different groups.

Understanding how course requirements and breadth work together

Course requirements and breadth requirements are distinct, and both must be met to satisfy program requirements. It may be helpful to think of each requirement separately.

PhD course and breadth requirement checklist

Requirement	PhD-EM	PhD-T	PhD-U
Full-course Equivalents (FCE)	2.0 FCE (4 half courses)	2.0 FCE (4 half courses)	4.0 FCE (8 half courses)
Unique Course Groups	3	3*	3
Courses taken from the approved list	At least 5 courses	At least 5* courses	At least 5 courses

*Can be drawn from a combination of courses completed in the MSc and PhD in Computer Science.

3.3 Breadth evaluation

Graduate courses completed in a prior **graduate** program may be deemed equivalent to courses on the approved list and hence qualify to fulfill the breadth requirement. The optional [Breadth Evaluation Form](#) allows a student to request such equivalency. Breadth evaluation is distinct from transfer credit and does not reduce the number of courses a student is required to take. The assessment is done by the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies, sometimes in consultation with other faculty members. To support a breadth evaluation request, the student should submit:

- a syllabus or copy of the course notes;
- the course grading scheme;
- copies of assignments or exams;
- copies of their course projects; and
- proof of their grade in the course (e.g., their transcript).

Note that graduate courses taken during a Bachelor's degree do not count towards the breadth requirement. Submit the [Breadth Evaluation Form](#) to gradoffice.cs@utoronto.ca.

3.4 Plan of study

By the end of the first month of registration in the PhD program, students must submit a [Plan of Study Form](#) to the Graduate Office for approval, listing the courses they propose to take to satisfy the breadth requirement. Note that not all courses are offered each year, and it is not always known in advance which courses will be offered. Therefore, it is understood that a student's proposed list of courses might need to be altered in the future. If the list of courses a student will use to satisfy the breadth requirement changes, the student must submit a revised [Plan of Study Form](#).

Students who submit their [Plan of Study Form](#) by the advanced deadline (July 5, 2026) will be eligible for priority enrolment in up to two CS graduate courses in each of the fall and winter sessions.

3.5 Courses outside Computer Science

Students are allowed to take courses offered by other departments, provided that the offering department grants permission to enroll, and that the student's overall coursework meets the breadth requirements of their degree. Students may propose courses to be added to the approved [list](#) by contacting the [Graduate Office](#) and providing a course syllabus, grading scheme, projects and assignments for formal review.

3.6 Breadth requirements for students who began prior to September 2024

Students who began their PhD program prior to September 2024 or who began their MSc program in DCS prior to September 2024 and transitioned to the PhD can either fulfill the breadth requirements described above or can fulfill the breadth requirements described in the PhD handbook from any year since they began. The handbooks from previous years can be found on the [DCS website](#). To change to the new breadth requirements, a student should submit a new [Plan of Study Form](#).



4. PhD Student Supervision

4.1 Supervisor

Every PhD student is assigned a supervisor (and possibly a co-supervisor) upon admission to the program. In some cases, such as for students in the Theory Group, students will be assigned an interim advisor prior to registration and a research supervisor by the beginning of their second term. In such cases, once a supervisor has been assigned, the student should submit a [Graduate Supervision Form](#) to the Graduate Office. The supervisor advises on course and thesis topic selection and provides ongoing support while the student conducts research. All students are required to consult frequently with their supervisors throughout their graduate studies, to report on their progress, to ask questions, to obtain advice regarding their research and to get approvals for plans of study and internships.

To be the primary or sole supervisor of a PhD student, a faculty member must hold Full Graduate Faculty Membership (GFM) in the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) within the University of Toronto, with a specific faculty appointment in the Department of Computer Science (CS-SGS membership). When a PhD student is co-supervised, one of their co-supervisors must be identified as the primary supervisor (also known as the supervisor of record). The other co-supervisor must hold Full, Emeritus or Associate GFM in CS-SGS.

Successful supervision is a shared responsibility between the student and the supervisor. Students are responsible for attending mutually agreed upon meetings and for being responsive to supervisor feedback. The [supervision guidelines provided by SGS](#) are excellent resources for making the most of this relationship. Take note of the checklists in Appendix 2 of both the [Supervision Guidelines for Students](#) and the [Supervision Guidelines for Faculty](#). The Department of Computer Science supports the expectations stated in these guides, and we encourage students to discuss these guidelines with their supervisor(s).

Even when their supervisor is on leave, a student is responsible for maintaining good academic progress. Prior to taking a leave, a supervisor should meet with their student to discuss how the student will be supervised during the leave. If a student has questions about supervision during a leave, they can contact the [Graduate Office](#).

Occasionally, the student–supervisor match is unproductive. Any student who finds themselves in such a situation should discuss difficulties or concerns with their current supervisor, a member of the [Graduate Office](#), the [Graduate Student Liaison](#) or the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies. Students are also encouraged to take advantage of SGS [resources](#) and the confidential support offered by the [Centre for Graduate Mentorship and Supervision](#). In many cases, the issues might be resolved by talking about them. If a resolution cannot be found, students are invited to seek advice from the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies. Note that students registered in the PhD program are required to have a supervisor to progress through their program. When a change of supervisor is made, a student must submit the [Graduate Supervision Form](#) to the [Graduate Office](#) for formal approval.

*The **Graduate Student Liaison** is a Computer Science faculty member who provides confidential non-supervisory guidance on your program, academic concerns and support in navigating your supervisory relationship. Please reach out via email at gradliaison.cs@utoronto.ca to schedule an appointment.*

4.2 PhD Supervisory Committee

The purpose of the student's PhD supervisory committee is both to aid the student by providing timely advice and to evaluate the student's progress towards a PhD thesis.

Doctoral students should form their PhD supervisory committee by the deadline associated with their program of registration:

Program	Deadline
PhD-Transitioned	by the end of the 4th month of registration
PhD-External Master's	by the end of the 8th month of registration
PhD-Direct Entry	by the end of the 12th month of registration

Supervisory Committee composition

The committee must consist of at least three members, including the supervisor and, if applicable, the co-supervisor. All members must hold an Associate, Full or Emeritus Graduate Faculty Membership (GFM) with the School of Graduate Studies at the University of Toronto. At least two members must hold Full GFM in CS-SGS. The committee must contain at least one [Research Stream Faculty member in DCS](#).

For students who began their program before Fall 2025, a committee composition that does not meet these requirements may have been approved. If that is the case, at the time of your final oral exam, the internal-external must be a Research Stream Faculty member in DCS.

External experts

External experts can participate in a supervisory committee. An external expert is typically someone who provides specialized expertise not available within the university. External experts are not formal members of the supervisory committee. However, they can take part in all the student's committee meetings with the following exceptions: (a) they do not contribute to a quorum, and (b) although they are permitted to attend the student's Final Oral Examination, they cannot vote. The request for an external expert to serve as an advisor on a PhD committee may be submitted by e-mail to the [Graduate Office](#), accompanied by a brief rationale and CV, for review by the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies.

Committee chair

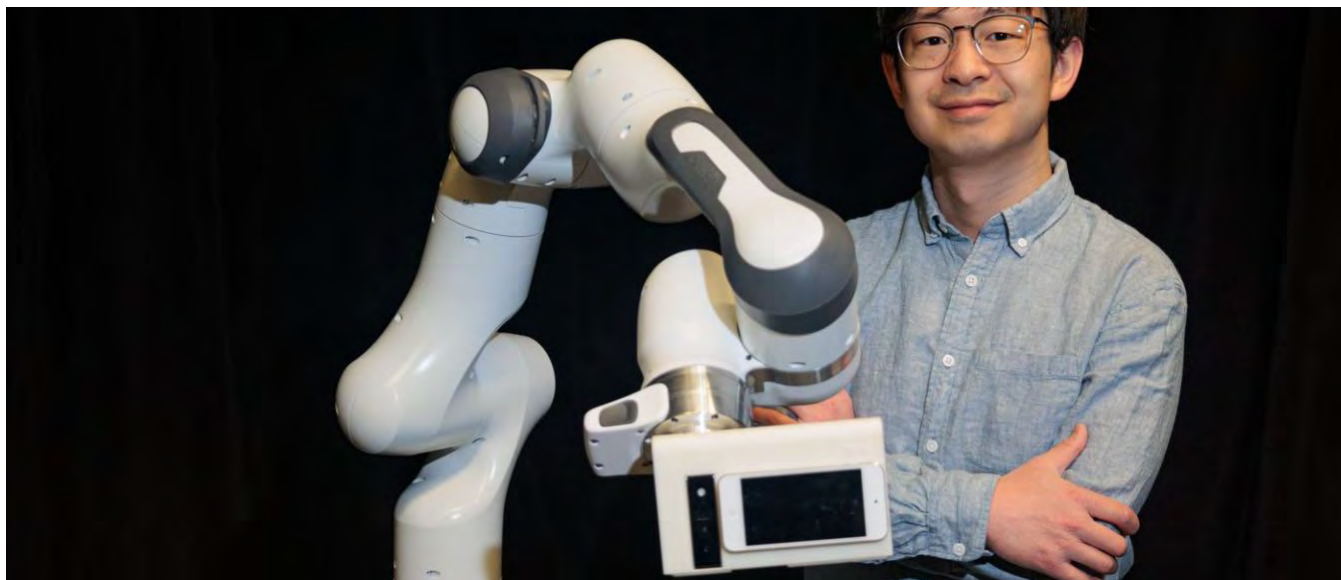
The supervisory committee is chaired by a member who is neither the supervisor nor the co-supervisor. Students should consult their committee members about who will serve as chair. The chair is responsible for running the committee's meetings and reporting the results to the Graduate Office.

Changes to the Supervisory Committee

Students should notify the [Graduate Office](#) of the formation of the PhD supervisory committee and of any changes using the [Graduate Supervision Form](#). Changes to a student's supervisory committee must be reported immediately, and are subject to approval by the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies.

Supervisory Committee composition checklist

Requirement	Confirmed
All members hold a GFM at the School of Graduate Studies, University of Toronto	☐
Supervisor holds a Full GFM in Computer Science	☐
If you have a co-supervisor, they hold an Associate, Full or Emeritus GFM in Computer Science	☐
Two of the committee members hold a Full GFM in Computer Science	☐
At least one of your supervisory committee members is a Research Stream Faculty member in Computer Science	☐



5. Milestones and Annual Supervisory Committee Meetings

To ensure that students are making satisfactory progress in their program, a series of milestones must be passed, beginning with the Research Presentation ([Section 5.4](#)) and ending with the Departmental Thesis Examination ([Section 5.9](#)), in preparation for the Final Oral Examination ([Section 5.10](#)).

*The purpose of each milestone is different and it is NOT permitted to combine milestones. Supervisory committee meetings for distinct milestones should be **a minimum of eight weeks apart**.*

5.1 Annual Supervisory Committee meetings

Students must meet with their supervisory committee on a regular basis. The purpose of supervisory committee meetings is to assess the student's research progress and to provide feedback on the student's research plans for the coming year. The first supervisory committee meeting is the Research Presentation ([Section 5.4](#)). The second is the Qualifying Oral Examination ([Section 5.5](#)). Subsequent annual committee meetings must be held at least once every 12 months prior to the Departmental Thesis Examination ([Section 5.9](#)). The supervisory committee may require that a student's next meeting be held earlier. Students are encouraged by SGS to schedule supervisory committee meetings every six months following their qualifying oral examination to discuss their progress with their supervisory committee.

*To be official and appear on their student record, a student must schedule all supervisory committee meetings through the Graduate Office by submitting the [Supervisory Committee Meeting Scheduling Form](#) at least two weeks before any meeting (**three weeks** for the Departmental Thesis Examination). In addition, the chair of the supervisory committee must submit their report to the Graduate Office following the meeting.*

Student preparation

The student should prepare a paper (for a supervisory committee meeting that involves a milestone) or a progress report (for a supervisory committee meeting that does not involve a milestone) to discuss with their committee. The nature of the paper depends on the milestone and is described in the following subsections.

Meeting format

Supervisory committee meetings should be held in person. If this is not possible, a good reason must be provided, and approval must be obtained from the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies, at least 2 weeks in advance. If approved, a protocol for handling the committee's deliberations, both before the presentation and after the questioning, will be sent to the committee chair in advance of the meeting.

Quorum

A quorum requires three members, including the supervisor(s). If a quorum is not met, the milestone must be rescheduled. If quorum is met but a committee member is absent, the student should present their material to that member individually. The member should then communicate their assessment to the committee chair for inclusion in the committee's report. If a committee member cannot attend the supervisory committee meeting and is not available to have the material presented to them individually, an alternate faculty member can serve in the committee member's absence with the approval of the entire supervisory committee and the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies.

Committee feedback

The Chair Report for Doctoral Milestones & Supervisory Committee Meetings should be completed in consultation with the PhD Handbook. Generally, students should follow the handbook corresponding to the start of their program. After each supervisory committee meeting, the meeting chair will provide written feedback to the [Graduate Office](#). The Graduate Office will forward the feedback to the student and invite them to respond.

Record of meeting results

- **Pass:** Usually accompanied by constructive feedback and/or suggestions for the next session(s).
- **Conditional Pass:** The student is given one or more concrete tasks to complete by a specific deadline (no more than 12 months later). If the student successfully clears the conditions by the deadline, the milestone outcome will be changed to Pass. If the student fails to clear the conditions by the deadline, their progress will be considered unsatisfactory. The milestone outcome will be changed to Fail (no option to repeat).
- **Fail (with the option to repeat):** The student is not considered to be making satisfactory academic progress and must hold another supervisory committee meeting to repeat the milestone within 6 months.
- **Fail (no option to repeat):** The committee recommends that the student must either withdraw from the program or have their registration terminated. This result is only possible for students who received a Fail outcome (with the option to repeat) in a previous meeting.

Record of meeting feedback

At each Supervisory Committee meeting, the committee records written feedback on the student's performance using the criteria below. Each criterion is rated as exceeds expectations, meets expectations or does not meet expectations, assessed relative to a top-performing student at a comparable stage of the program. The evaluation should be substantive and rigorous.

A criterion that was not evaluated during the meeting, either because it was not applicable to the student's current stage of the program or because insufficient information was available to make a fair assessment, should be marked Not Assessed.

Knowledge of research area

Rating	Definition
Exceeds expectations	The student demonstrates a sophisticated and comprehensive understanding of their research area, including current literature, key concepts and emerging directions. The student consistently engages with ideas beyond the immediate scope of their project and shows intellectual initiative in exploring connections across the field.
Meets expectations	The student demonstrates a solid understanding of the core literature and key concepts relevant to their research area. The student can situate their work within the broader field and engages meaningfully with relevant scholarship at their stage of the program.
Does not meet expectations	The student demonstrates gaps in their understanding of the core literature or key concepts relevant to their research area. The student has difficulty situating their work within the broader field or engaging substantively with relevant scholarship.

Oral communication

Rating	Definition
Exceeds expectations	Communicates the research problem, methods, results and contributions with a high degree of clarity. Technical concepts are accurate and easy to follow. Organization of the presentation and use of visuals and evidence are highly effective. Responses to questions are insightful, on point and demonstrate strong subject-matter expertise.
Meets expectations	Communicates the research problem, methods, results and contributions with sufficient clarity and accuracy. Technical concepts are generally understandable. Organization of the presentation, and use of visuals and evidence are effective. Responses to questions demonstrate solid understanding of the work appropriate to the student's stage in the program.
Does not meet expectations	Communication is unclear, incomplete or inaccurate. Technical concepts are difficult to understand or contain significant inaccuracies. Organization of the presentation, and use of visuals and evidence are ineffective or impede understanding. Responses to questions demonstrate limited understanding of the work or are frequently incomplete, inaccurate or off topic.

Research skills

Rating	Definition
Exceeds expectations	The student demonstrates strong independent research skills, including the ability to identify meaningful research questions, design and execute appropriate methodologies, analyze results critically and adapt their approach in response to findings. The student shows initiative and creativity in their research practice.
Meets expectations	The student demonstrates the research skills expected at their stage of the program, including the ability to conduct their research with appropriate guidance, analyze findings and make progress toward defined research goals. The student is developing independence in their research practice.
Does not meet expectations	The student demonstrates gaps in core research skills at their stage of the program. The student may struggle to execute their methodology, interpret findings or make meaningful progress without substantial guidance.

Written communication

Rating	Definition
Exceeds expectations	The student produces written work that is clear, well-organized and of high scholarly quality. Writing demonstrates a strong command of academic conventions, precise argumentation and effective use of evidence. Written outputs such as proposals, papers or thesis chapters are above the standard expected for the student's stage.
Meets expectations	The student produces written work that meets the standards expected at their stage of the program. Writing is generally clear and organized, with an adequate command of academic conventions. Some refinement may be needed, but overall written communication is satisfactory.
Does not meet expectations	The student's written work does not consistently meet the standards expected at their stage of the program. Writing may lack clarity, organization or appropriate academic conventions. Significant revision and development are required. The committee should encourage the student to access writing support resources, including the Graduate Centre for Academic Communication.

Progress since last meeting

Rating	Definition
Exceeds expectations	The student has made exceptional progress since the last meeting, completing planned milestones and demonstrating additional initiative. The student is ahead of or well on track with their program timeline, and their trajectory toward completion is strong.
Meets expectations	The student has made satisfactory progress since the last meeting, completing or substantially advancing the milestones discussed. The student is on track with their program timeline and is progressing toward completion in a manner consistent with expectations at their stage.

Rating	Definition
Does not meet expectations	The student has not made adequate progress since the last meeting. Planned milestones have not been completed or substantially advanced and the student's trajectory raises concern. The committee should discuss the barriers to progress and establish a clear, specific plan with defined expectations for the next meeting period.

Interpersonal skills and professionalism

Rating	Definition
Exceeds expectations	The student consistently demonstrates a high standard of professionalism and positive interpersonal conduct. The student is collaborative, communicative and respectful in their interactions with supervisors, committee members, peers and staff. The student adheres to academic policies and deadlines and contributes constructively to the research environment.
Meets expectations	The student demonstrates the professionalism and interpersonal skills expected at their stage of the program. The student engages respectfully and constructively with supervisors, peers and staff, and generally adheres to academic policies, procedures and deadlines.
Does not meet expectations	The student's conduct in one or more areas of professionalism or interpersonal engagement does not meet expectations. This may include difficulties with communication, collaboration, adherence to deadlines or policies or professional conduct. Specific concerns should be documented and discussed directly with the student, with clear expectations established going forward.

5.2 Deadlines for PhD program milestones

There are different deadlines for achieving the milestones in each PhD program. To remain in good standing, students must meet these milestones by the stated deadline, which occurs several months into the program. To avoid delays caused by scheduling and other problems, it is a good idea to plan to pass the milestones significantly earlier than the stated deadlines.

PHD-Transitioned (completed MSc in Department of Computer Science at U of T)

Milestone	Deadline
Plan of Study approval	1 month
Supervisory Committee approval	4 months
Research presentation	4 months
Qualifying oral examination	12 months
Research vision	24 months
Achieve candidacy	28 months
Supervisory Committee meeting with thesis proposal	34 months

Milestone	Deadline
Departmental thesis examination	40 months
Final Oral Examination	43 months

PHD-External Master's

Milestone	Deadline
Plan of Study approval	1 month
Supervisory Committee approval	8 months
Research presentation	8 months
Qualifying oral examination	16 months
Research vision	28 months
Achieve candidacy	28 months
Supervisory Committee meeting with thesis proposal	38 months
Departmental thesis examination	44 months
Final Oral Examination	47 months

PHD-Direct Entry

Milestone	Deadline
Plan of Study approval	1 month
Supervisory Committee approval	12 months
Complete CSC4000Y and research presentation	16 months
Qualifying oral examination	28 months
Research vision	40 months
Achieve candidacy	40 months
Supervisory Committee meeting with thesis proposal	50 months
Departmental thesis examination	56 months
Final Oral Examination	59 months

5.3 Use of generative Artificial Intelligence in milestones

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, meaning those that produce new text, code, images, audio or other content, are increasingly used in research and writing. Their use in any work submitted for a graduate academic milestone, including the research presentation, qualifying oral examination, research vision, thesis, departmental thesis examination and Final Oral Examination, must uphold the core principles of academic quality, research integrity and transparency. This section summarizes key points; for full detail, students and supervisors should consult the School of Graduate Studies [Guidance on the Appropriate Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence for Graduate Academic Milestones](#).

Students are expected to seek and document, in writing, unambiguous approval from their supervisor(s) and supervisory committee before using generative AI tools in milestone work. In particular:

- Approval applies to each specific task. Permission to use a tool for one purpose (for example, searching the literature) does not extend to others (for example, drafting or editing thesis text), and separate approval is required for each use.
- Students remain fully responsible for all content they submit, including any produced with AI, and are accountable for its accuracy and originality, as well as for compliance with requirements regarding intellectual property, privacy and research ethics.
- Any use of generative AI must be clearly cited and described, including which tools were used, how and why they were used, in accordance with citation norms, as with other methods and tools.
- The doctoral thesis must represent the student's own original contribution to knowledge. Content generated by AI may not meet this standard of originality, and the committee must be able to distinguish the student's contributions from those of any tool.
- At the Final Oral Examination, students must be able to describe and defend any use of generative AI as well as the full content of the thesis.

Students should also be aware of the limitations of these tools, which can produce inaccurate, biased or fabricated material, including references to works that do not exist, and which raise security and privacy considerations. Relying on AI for writing may also impede the development of the scholarly writing skills that are central to graduate training. Unauthorized use of generative AI in milestone work may constitute an offence under the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) or research misconduct under the [Policy on Ethical Conduct in Research](#).

5.4 Research presentation

A student must form their PhD supervisory committee and have it approved at least two weeks before this milestone. At the beginning of the Research Presentation, the student will give a 15- to 20-minute talk about their paper. This will be followed by one or more rounds of questioning by their supervisory committee. During this questioning, it is critical that the student demonstrate an understanding of CS tools and techniques that are relevant to pursuing research in the area.

- **PhD-Transitioned** students should present the research project they completed in CSC4000Y to their supervisory committee. A copy of a paper they wrote on this research project should be submitted to their committee at least one week before the meeting.

- **PhD-External Master's** students should present a graduate research project equivalent to that required for CSC4000Y. A copy of a paper they wrote on this research project should be submitted to their committee at least one week before the meeting.
- **PhD-Direct Entry** students must write a research paper (as below) and then should present the research project they undertook. Once presented, this will be credited as CSC4000Y. This project should demonstrate their ability to conduct independent work in reviewing the relevant literature, identifying a problem in a research area, organizing existing concepts, suggesting and developing new approaches to solving problems in that area and reporting the results. The standard is that this work could reasonably be submitted for peer-reviewed publication. Negative results are also acceptable, provided a reasonable prior hypothesis and a thorough analysis of the reasons for them. This paper should be submitted to the committee at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. Direct-entry students should consult the requirements for the major research paper listed in the MSc Handbook.

Requirements for research paper (from the MSc Handbook):

A major component of the research project is writing a research paper. It should contain a thorough discussion of related work and a comprehensive list of references. Depending on the nature of the research, the paper should contain a clear description of motivation, the model, the algorithms, experimental methodology, experimental results or the results of user studies. All claims must be fully supported. This may include complete proofs or links to code or other artifacts, such as videos, that are part of the student's research project. As an example, a research paper might be an expanded version of a workshop or conference publication, including details that may have been omitted. A rough guideline for the length is 25 to 60 double spaced pages using an 11- or 12-point font.

5.5 Qualifying oral examination

There are two alternatives:

- The student, working with their supervisor, selects 5–10 important research papers in one research area of CS. It is expected that the student will have read and understood more than just the selected papers, but it is not expected that the student has mastered most of the relevant literature at the time of this exam. This research area need not correspond to the student's eventual choice of PhD topic — students are not required to have committed to a thesis topic at this stage. The student will prepare a short paper (about 4,000 words or 8 single-spaced pages in a reasonable font) that discusses these papers, including the strengths and weaknesses of their research methods and results and how they relate to one another. If the student has begun investigating this area themselves, they are welcome to briefly describe their progress so far. This paper should be submitted to their committee at least one week before the meeting. At the beginning of the qualifying examination, the student will give a 15–20-minute talk about their paper. This will be followed by one or more rounds of questioning by the supervisory committee in which the student will be examined on foundational skills for PhD Candidates (a) through (g) listed in [Section 1](#). A student may discuss the expected overall scope of the questioning with their supervisory committee prior to the exam.
- A student who is making excellent research progress and whose qualifying examination is completed by the deadline for their program (as listed in the PhD Handbook) may present a

research paper to which they have made substantial and significant research contributions. This paper must describe research that they have conducted since their research presentation milestone and whose contribution is distinct from the paper they presented at their research presentation milestone. If this paper has co-authors, there should be a clear statement of what the student's contributions were to the research and the writing of the paper. The standard for this paper is that it could reasonably be submitted for peer-reviewed publication. This paper should be submitted to the members of their committee at least two weeks before the meeting. At the beginning of the qualifying examination, the student will give a 15–20-minute talk about their paper. It will focus on the student's contribution to the paper and the broader context of the work, including comparisons and contrasts with related work. This will be followed by one or more rounds of questioning by the Supervisory Committee in which the student will be examined on foundational skills for PhD candidates (a) through (g) listed in [Section 1](#). During this questioning, the students must also demonstrate their research independence, understanding of the research context and a deep understanding of the CS tools and techniques relevant to pursuing research in the area.

The choice between these two alternatives will be decided by the student's supervisor(s), in consultation with the student. The Graduate Office should be informed of this choice at least two months before the qualifying oral examination is held, unless both the student and the supervisor(s) agree that shorter notice is justified. Supervisors will be responsible for ensuring that students demonstrate research breadth and for making decisions based on individual students' needs. If the student needs to demonstrate more breadth in their research area, an alternative should be chosen.

5.6 Research vision

For the research vision milestone, a student should present a proposal outlining the research they plan to conduct for their PhD thesis. As with a grant proposal or a scholarship application, it should include:

- a clear description of the topic,
- why it is interesting to study,
- the relevant related research from the literature and
- an initial research plan.

The student should submit a written description of their research vision to their committee at least one week before the supervisory committee meeting. The student will also give a 15- to 20-minute talk clearly describing their research vision to their committee. This will be followed by one or more rounds of questions by the members of their committee about it and related topics. Passing this checkpoint satisfies the approval of the thesis topic for admission to candidacy.

5.7 Candidacy

A PhD student is said to have achieved candidacy when they have completed all the requirements of their program except for the dissertation. SGS requires that PhD-External Master's and PhD-Transition students achieve candidacy within the first 36 months of their program, and PhD-Direct Entry students within the first 48 months. Note that this is 8 months after the departmental deadlines.

Achieving candidacy involves:

- The formation of the supervisory committee ([Section 4.2](#));
- Completing all required courses and satisfying breadth requirements ([Section 3](#));
- Successfully passing the research presentation ([Section 5.4](#));
- Successfully passing the qualifying oral examination ([Section 5.5](#)); and
- Having a thesis topic/research vision approved at a meeting of the student's supervisory committee ([Section 5.6](#)).

Students who do not achieve candidacy within the required time are not considered in good standing and may be terminated from the program. Requests for an extension will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

5.8 Thesis proposal

The thesis proposal is a meeting of the supervisory committee at which the student's plan for the overall scope of the eventual thesis is considered for approval. In preparation, the student should submit a written proposal to the supervisory committee, at least one week before the meeting, that:

1. Outlines both the completed and the anticipated results of the thesis;
2. Demonstrates that a substantial portion of research has been successfully completed; and
3. Provides a clear plan for completing the remaining research.

Typically, a thesis proposal is a draft of a substantial portion of the dissertation itself, along with a clear description of the remaining work to be completed. At the beginning of the meeting, the student should give a 15- to 20-minute talk about their thesis proposal. The supervisory committee assesses the scope and relevance of the problems the student intends to solve in the proposed PhD dissertation. The thesis proposal is typically completed 6–12 months prior to the Departmental Thesis Examination.

Legacy System: *PhD students who enrolled before 1 September 2015 may continue with the previous PhD milestone system or opt into the present system. However, if a student under the legacy system fails to have a committee meeting for 18 months or more, they will be automatically placed into the new system.*

5.9 Departmental Thesis Examination

At the Departmental Thesis Examination, the student defends their dissertation before their supervisory committee. Other members of the department are also invited. A draft of the dissertation should be given to the committee members three to four weeks in advance of the examination. Each member of the committee is expected to read the dissertation in sufficient detail to form a judgement about its acceptability.

In the examination, the student presents an overview of their dissertation, in 20 minutes or less, with an emphasis on the novel aspects and contributions. The committee members then question the student in as many rounds as necessary. Unlike other milestones, the student's presentation and committee questioning are open to all department members, and students are encouraged to attend. Exams are

announced to the department before the event. The committee's deliberations, both before and after the presentation and questioning, remain private and confidential.

In writing their dissertation, students should consult the SGS [Student Guidelines for the Doctoral Thesis](#). They provide a framework for what a thesis at the doctoral level should achieve.

Doctoral thesis requirements checklist

Requirement	Confirmed
Demonstrate how your research makes an original contribution by advancing knowledge in your field	☐
Show a thorough familiarity with the field and an ability to critically analyze the relevant literature	☐
Display a mastery of research methods and their application	☐
Offer a complete and systematic account of your scholarly work	☐
Present the results and analysis of your original research	☐
Document your sources and support your claims	☐
Locate your work within the broader field or discipline	☐
Write in a style that respects the norms of academic and scholarly communication	☐

5.10 Final Oral Examination at the School of Graduate Studies

Upon the successful completion of the Departmental Thesis Examination and any required revisions to the dissertation, the candidate will be ready to go forward to the Final Oral Examination (FOE) at the School of Graduate Studies.

Picking a date for your Final Oral Examination

Selecting a date for the FOE should be done in consultation with a student's supervisory committee. A typical FOE process, from identifying an external appraiser to submitting the dissertation to the Electronic Thesis Database, takes about one academic session to complete (14 weeks!). Students will also need to plan their exam date around personal goals (e.g., avoiding registration fees, securing prospective job offers, meeting program deadlines and applying for awards). Students planning their Final Oral Examination are encouraged to meet with the [Graduate Office](#) to discuss their timelines and achieve their goals.

You must allow 10 weeks, at minimum, lead time in advance of the exam date. This time is required for SGS to approve the external appraiser; for the external appraiser and other new committee members to read the dissertation; and for the external appraiser to write a detailed report that is received by the student at least two weeks (10 business days) before the exam.

The Final Oral Examination Committee

The Examination Committee of the FOE consists of one to three members of the student's original Supervisory Committee and at least two examiners who have not been involved in the supervision of the thesis, including an External Appraiser approved by SGS and one or two members of SGS, from DCS or other departments of the university. At least one [Research Stream Faculty member of the Department of Computer Science](#) must be a member of the Examination Committee. Quorum is 4 voting members, with at least two who were not part of the supervisory committee.

The External Appraiser

The External Appraiser must be at arm's length from both the student and the supervisor(s). Normally, this will exclude anyone who has served as Master's or PhD Supervisor/Supervisee of the Candidate or the Supervisor or has, in the past six years, been a departmental colleague of the Candidate or the Supervisor, or has collaborated on a research project, scholarly work or publication, with either of them. SGS qualifications for external appraisers are available [here](#). The SGS Vice Dean, Students, will assess whether the nominee is at arm's length.

The Supervisor is responsible for finding an external appraiser and confirming their availability, sending their nomination to the Graduate Office for approval by the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies and scheduling the Final Oral Exam with all members of the FOE committee and the student once the external examiner is approved by SGS. A nomination should include a brief rationale attesting to the proposed appraiser's expertise on the subject of the thesis as well as a CV listing **all** publications (not just selected publications) and **all** graduate student supervision (including dates of supervision and when students completed their degrees) or links to online sources for this information.

SGS Approval of the external appraiser may take up to two weeks. Once approved, the student may submit the [Final Oral Exam Scheduling Form](#). The exam must be held at least 8 weeks after the form has been submitted. The exam date and time must not be changed once it has been scheduled, except with the permission of the SGS Vice-Dean, Students.

The Final Oral Examination Chair

The FOE is chaired by a non-voting member appointed by SGS from another department of the university. The appointment is facilitated by the School of Graduate Studies. If the minimum 8 weeks' notice of the examination is not maintained, SGS waives the responsibility to secure the FOE chair. In this event, the supervisor is responsible for securing a chair for the exam who meets SGS requirements and providing details to the Graduate Office.

Distribution of the dissertation

At least eight weeks before the exam, the student must submit a copy of the thesis to the [Graduate Office](#) for submission to the external appraiser and the committee. Students may not have any contact with the external appraiser once the external appraiser has received the dissertation until the exam.

Receipt of the appraisal

The Graduate Office will be responsible for distributing copies of the appraisal to the candidate and to all members of the examination committee. Once the student has received the report, the student can prepare any necessary rebuttals or answers to the appraiser's questions. The appraisal is due two weeks before the scheduled FOE date. It is received by the Graduate Office from the external appraiser and distributed to the student and committee via email. If the appraisal is not available two weeks prior to the exam, the Graduate Office will contact the candidate to determine if they wish to proceed with the exam under these circumstances. If the student wishes to proceed despite the delay in receiving the appraisal, the student must sign a waiver; otherwise, the oral exam is postponed. Students are not permitted to postpone the exam on the basis of the result of the appraisal report.

All forms and instructions are available on the [DCS Graduate Forms and Handbooks web page](#). Full FOE details and regulations, including how the exam is conducted and how to prepare for it, can be found on the SGS website. All students preparing to schedule their Final Oral Exam are invited to meet with the Graduate Office to go over timelines and procedures.

The sample timeline below shows how long it can take for a student to complete their program once they reach the stage of commencing planning for their Final Oral Examination. Timelines are listed as minimums. Students are advised to allow more time wherever possible so that their examination is not rushed.

FOE Sample Timeline

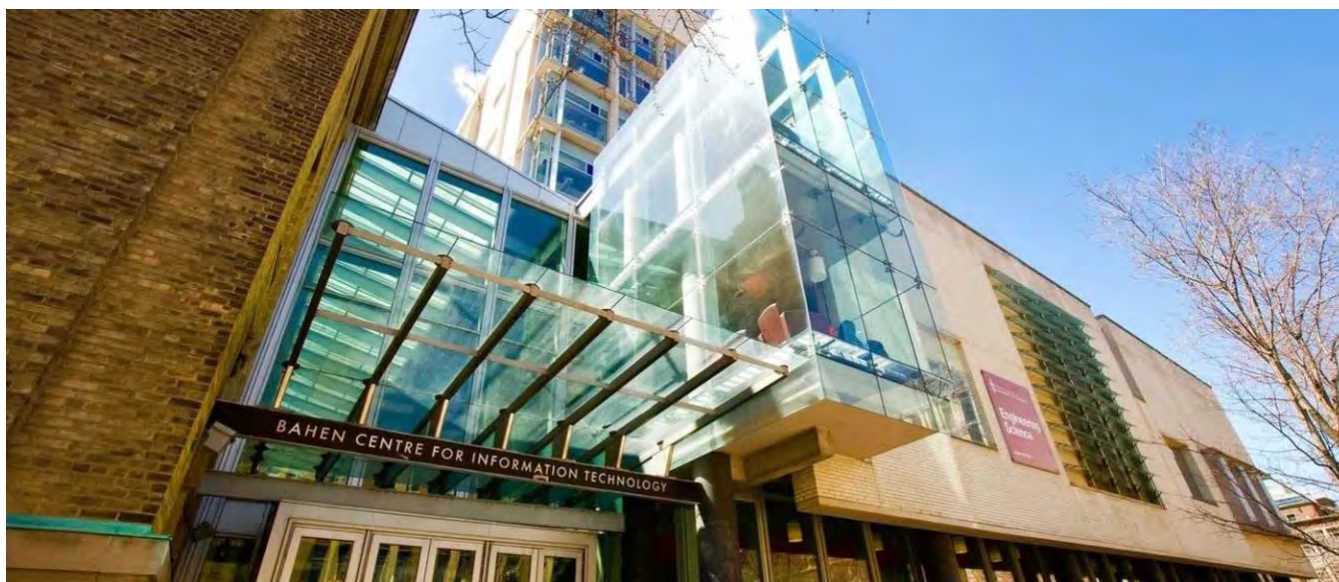
Final Oral Exam Step	Deadline
Submit External Appraiser to Graduate Office	10 weeks in advance of the anticipated FOE date
Submit FOE Scheduling form and copy of final dissertation to the Graduate Office	8 weeks in advance of the anticipated FOE date
Graduate Office distributes the dissertation to the External Appraiser	6 weeks in advance of the anticipated FOE date
Receipt of the External Appraisal and distribution to the student and committee	2 weeks in advance of the anticipated FOE date
Final Oral Examination	0 weeks in advance of anticipated FOE date
Final Oral Examination results	0 weeks post anticipated FOE date
Revisions to the dissertation	1-12 weeks post anticipated FOE date
Written confirmation of completed revisions to the dissertation by the supervisor	1-12 weeks post anticipated FOE date
Upload of dissertation to the Electronic Thesis Database	1-12 weeks post anticipated FOE date

5.11 Graduation

Following the completion of the Final Oral Exam and the submission of the final dissertation with any required corrections or revisions to the [Electronic Thesis Database](#), SGS will submit a Recommendation for Degree Completion and the student's name will be added to the convocation roster.

Results	Deadline to submit final dissertation
As Stands	7 days from the date of the examination
Editorial Corrections	1 month from the date of the examination
Minor Revisions	3 months from the date of the examination

Candidates who upload their approved thesis in advance of the September thesis deadline (by September 28) will convocate in the Fall. Candidates who upload their approved thesis by January 15 will have the option to convocate in either March (without a ceremony) or in June. An email with graduation information and instructions regarding convocation dates, diploma pickup and ticket reservations will be sent to the student's utoronto email address from the Convocation Office.



6. Timelines, Deadlines and (Un)Satisfactory Progress

6.1 Time limit to degree completion

There are two program time limits. The departmental time limit refers to the period during which a student receives guaranteed funding from the department. SGS time limits refer to the amount of time that a student may register in their program.

Program	Departmental guaranteed funding period	SGS time limit for degree
PhD-Transitioned	44 months	72 months
PhD-External Master's	48 months	72 months
PhD-Direct Entry	60 months	84 months

In exceptional circumstances, a PhD student who does not complete all the requirements for the degree within the SGS time limit may be considered for a maximum of up to four one-year extensions, bringing the final limit to 10 years for the PhD-Transitioned and PhD-External Master's programs and 11 years for the PhD-Direct-Entry program.

Students who have serious health problems or personal circumstances that prevent them from making satisfactory progress are entitled to take a leave from graduate studies. Such a leave effectively stops the clock for funding and time to degree completion. Students encountering difficulties should connect with the Graduate Office at gradoffice.cs@utoronto.ca.

6.2 Deadlines are serious

Students who fail to meet the deadlines for milestones and progress reviews will be considered to be not making satisfactory academic progress. Students who anticipate they will be unable to schedule a committee meeting before the deadline should contact the [Graduate Office](#) as soon as possible.

Students should also familiarize themselves with the SGS General Regulations section on [Degree Regulations for Doctoral Degrees](#); and specific program requirements for Computer Science in the [Programs by Graduate Unit](#) section of the SGS Calendar.

Students should notify the Graduate Office of all scheduled committee meetings at least two weeks in advance of the meeting (three weeks notice is required for the Departmental Thesis Exam). If the Graduate Office is not notified of a milestone or annual supervisory committee meeting in advance, it will not be official and will not count in the student's progress.

6.3 Unsatisfactory progress

A student who fails a course or a milestone meeting, who misses a second consecutive deadline or who is not moving forward in research is considered to be making unsatisfactory progress. This can have serious consequences. A student who is making unsatisfactory progress may lose all or part of their Departmental Fellowship. A student who continues to make unsatisfactory progress may be offered the option to either [withdraw](#) from the program or have their registration terminated (see [SGS information on termination](#)).

6.4 Transferring to the MSc program from the PhD program

Students in the PhD-Direct Entry and PhD-External Master's programs may request to transfer to the MSc program with the approval of the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies, in which case they will be required to complete the standard MSc program requirements. The student's guaranteed funding period will be reduced to 16 months, the limit for the MSc program. A [Program Transfer Form](#) must be submitted prior to the student's anticipated last session of registration (e.g., for a student who plans to finish in the summer, the form must be submitted to the Graduate Office in April at the latest).

A student must be registered in their new program for 1 session prior to graduation; however, a student is not required to register for the session in which they convocate, provided they complete the requirements of the MSc program by the required deadline. For example, a student transferring to the MSc program for the summer session must remain registered for the summer and may then convocate in the Fall without registration if their program requirements have been met by the deadline. Please see the [MSc Handbook](#) for detailed instructions about MSc program completion. International students who wish to transfer to the MSc are encouraged to submit their request to transfer in April, before the start of the summer session and to complete the MSc requirements in the summer session to avoid higher fees for international MSc students. PhD students who have not registered for four sessions may be required to pay any balance of degree fees outstanding on their account.

PhD students who transfer to the MSc program will not be eligible to return to the PhD program. All PhD students considering transferring to the Master's program should make an appointment with the [Graduate Office](#) to discuss potential fee and funding implications.

6.5 Withdrawal

Students considering program [withdrawal](#) must contact the [Graduate Office](#) at gradoffice.cs@utoronto.ca to discuss their options. Any student who withdraws from their program and is interested in rejoining must re-apply to the program to continue. Re-admission is not guaranteed.



7. Forms, Fees and Administrative Procedures

DCS and SGS forms for all common requests are available on the [DCS Graduate Forms and Handbooks webpage](#).

7.1 Adding and dropping courses

Students may enrol in courses for the 2026-27 Fall and Winter sessions starting on August 5 on [ACORN](#). The last day to add courses for the Fall session is September 23 and for the Winter session is January 18; after these dates, an [Add/Drop Course\(s\) Form](#) is needed to enrol in courses. For the Fall 2026 term, courses may be dropped in [ACORN](#) until October 26, and for the Winter 2027 term, February 26.

Dates and Deadlines for Graduate Courses Cross-Listed with Undergraduate Courses: Students taking a graduate course that has been cross-listed with an undergraduate course must follow the dates and deadlines for course enrolment outlined in the [SGS Calendar](#). It is the graduate student's responsibility to know the appropriate add and drop deadlines.

Coursework extension requests:

Occasionally, due to unforeseen circumstances (such as a documented medical reason), students may require additional time beyond the grade submission deadline to complete coursework. Coursework extensions must be signed by the course instructor and submitted to the Graduate Office at gradoffice.cs@utoronto.ca through the submission of an [Extension to Complete Coursework Form](#). Approved extensions will be marked as SDF (Standing Deferred) on the student's transcript until the final course grade is received. Students requiring additional time beyond the initial extension must contact the Graduate Office.

7.2 Registration and fees

Students are considered to be registered as soon as they have paid the minimum tuition and incidental fees or have made appropriate arrangements to defer their fees. Regardless of whether they are taking courses, students are expected to register every year and remain continuously registered until they complete their degree, unless they take approved leave. When students return from approved leave, they must re-register. Students who fail to register or are not permitted to register because they have reached the time limit for their degree (and a program extension was not approved) will have their registration end. Students who fail to register may not make demands on the University's resources, attend courses or expect advice from their supervisor. Students who fail to register by the sessional registration deadline will be charged a late registration fee.

General fee information

- Fee schedules are available on the University Registrar's [website](#) and students may pay, or defer their fees if eligible, as soon as their invoice is updated on [ACORN](#).
- UHIP charges for international students are included on their fees invoice.
- Students wishing to make a fees payment from outside of Canada may choose one of the fee payment options outlined on the University Registrar's [website](#).
- While students with outstanding severe conditions will be blocked from requesting registration without payment on [ACORN](#), they can still pay fees at the bank. The payment will not change an INVIT status to REG.
- Continuing students with outstanding conditions from the previous year, who have allowed their registration to lapse or have met their candidacy or program time limit, do not have an INVIT created for the session and will not be able to pay fees until conditions are cleared.

Failure to register

If you fail to register and wish to return to your studies, you must request to be reinstated in your program. Reinstatement is permitted, upon approval by the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies, if you are still within the maximum allowable time for your degree program. For more information, please contact <mailto:gradoffice.cs@utoronto.ca>.

Reinstated students in programs requiring continuity of registration must pay fees owing for any session(s) in which they did not register. More information is available on the School of Graduate Studies webpage, [Manage Your Program](#).

Outstanding conditions

Students admitted to the program are usually admitted with two types of conditions: severe and non-severe. The most common severe condition is the receipt of formal transcripts directly from the issuing institutions to the graduate office. Students will not be permitted to register until all severe conditions are cleared. Some students will also have severe conditions related to English Language Proficiency testing. Students can see their conditions on their formal SGS admission letter. Students should consult with the graduate office if they have any questions about their conditions. Non-severe conditions must also be cleared by the end of the first Fall term of registration, or by the deadline stated

in the admission letter, whichever is earlier. Failure to meet all conditions will result in a student's registration being revoked.

Requesting to register without payment (tuition fee deferral)

Students can request to register without payment via [ACORN](#) if they have no outstanding fees from a previous session and they are the recipient of one of the following awards, which exceeds the Minimum Payment to Register amount on their invoice:

- University funding (major award, research stipend or teaching assistantship);
- Award from an external agency (for example, NSERC or OGS);
- OSAP loan;
- Other provincial government loan; or
- U.S. government loan.

If a student is receiving a major award, research stipend or teaching assistantship which is not part of a funding package or requesting to register without payment after the registration deadline, the [Register Without Payment \(Fee Deferral\) Form](#) must be used. Policies about deadlines to pay tuition after a deferral are outlined on the form.

Invoices and paying tuition fees

Fee deferral only defers the payment of tuition. Students with a funding package will have a part of that package automatically applied to their tuition charges by the university. Students who defer their tuition and are not receiving one of these payments (generally University of Toronto Fellowships, NSERC or OGS/QEII) will have to arrange for payment themselves. Graduate students who receive their funding through different sources (such as the Human Resources Information System (HRIS) or payroll) are still eligible to defer their fees; however, they will need to pay their tuition and incidental fees manually in [ACORN](#). Graduate Students can learn more about the different sources of their income and how these are paid by reviewing their annual funding letter. Students are informed of fees payable through [ACORN](#). Students should remain aware of the status of the various items in their account. Failure to pay the full invoice amount by the deadline will result in accrual of interest charges and a block on registration for the next academic year.

Final year doctoral fees

Full-time students in the final year of their doctoral program pay a prorated tuition fee based on the full-year tuition fee for their program (i.e. number of months registered times one-twelfth of the annual fee). Fees are based on the date of final thesis submission to SGS, not the date of the defence.

Doctoral students who complete all degree requirements by September 15 do not pay fees for the September session. After September 15, and the 15th of every month thereafter, a monthly fee is charged for each month the degree requirements are not completed.

Doctoral students will be billed for the annual fee but may choose to pay: (1) the full fee, (2) the minimum first payment or (3) the fee based on the expected date of completion. If a student pays less than the full-year fee, a monthly service charge will be applied to any outstanding balance, starting

October 15. When degree requirements are complete, the Student Accounts Office will adjust the fees accordingly, including service charges to outstanding balances that have accrued since September 16.

Request for off-campus registration

Full-time students must be geographically available and visit the campus regularly. In some cases, it may be appropriate, with the approval of the student's supervisor, to be absent from the University for an extended period. In these cases, the student must submit a [Request for Off-Campus Registration Form](#) to the graduate office for review by the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies. Students who plan to be outside of Canada (including in the U.S.A.) must register with the University of Toronto Centre for International Experience [Safety Abroad Database](#).

7.3 Personal Time Off Policy

The Personal Time Off Policy allows full-time registered graduate students to take up to 15 business days of personal time off per academic year (Sept–Aug), in addition to statutory holidays and days designated as university closures or holidays. Students who are enrolled for only part of the academic year will have their allowable personal time off pro-rated. This will not result in any changes to registration or funding. The time off is not mandatory. See [the SGS Personal Time Off Policy and Understanding Personal Time Off](#) for more information.

A student must consult with, and receive approval from, their supervisor in advance of the time off. The time off must not compromise student research, coursework, overall progression through the curriculum or deadlines. This time off applies only to the students' academic program, not to their obligations as teaching assistants (which are regulated by the CUPE 3902 Unit 1 Collective Agreement) or to other research assistant/casual work. Students are responsible for documenting time-off information and maintaining their annual records for the duration of the program.

7.4 Leaves of absence — personal, medical, parental and internship

Personal, medical and parental leaves

Students requiring an extended period away from their studies should notify the [Graduate Office](#) as soon as possible. All students considering a leave of absence should meet with the [Graduate Office](#) in advance. Leaves of absence cannot be taken without formal approval from the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies. Leaves are always granted for an entire session and cannot be prorated to months or weeks. A scheduled leave can begin at the beginning of September, January or May. If it is necessary to take a leave outside of a normal academic session, please consult with the Graduate Office.

Paid Parental Leave: (1) *If the supervisor is supporting the student from an NSERC, CIHR or SSHRC grant, then the student may be entitled to continued support for up to 12 months while on parental leave; see the [Tri-Agency Financial Administration guide](#) for details.* (2) *The student may be eligible for an SGS Parental Grant for two or three sessions; see the [SGS Parental Grant webpage](#) for details.*

Internships

Internships are not a component of the research programs in the Department of Computer Science. However, they are recognized as an important experience for many of our graduate students. SGS does not distinguish between personal and internship leave, so students considering an internship leave should select “personal” on their leave-of-absence form. It is important to notify the [Graduate Office](#) well in advance of taking up an internship (see the table below) to determine whether a leave of absence is appropriate. Failure to meet these deadlines may mean paying back tuition and funding from the department and scholarships. If there is a substantive reason why a student is unable to meet the notification deadline, contact the Graduate Office.

Internship leave notification deadlines

Session	Notify Graduate Office by
Summer (May–August)	February 10
Fall (September–December)	June 30
Winter (January–April)	October 15

How to request a Leave of Absence

Students considering taking a leave should consult the [Graduate Office](#). Students may request an official leave of absence for one to three sessions by completing an SGS [Request for Leave of Absence Form](#) and submitting it to the Computer Science [Graduate Office](#) with a brief statement of the reasons that the leave is requested. The statement must be approved by their supervisor.

Key considerations for Leaves of Absence

Time to completion

For approved leaves, the remaining funding, the remaining components of the program and the time-to-completion for the degree will be extended by the amount of time (number of sessions) taken for the leave. This is calculated per session and cannot be prorated by weeks or days.

Tuition and fees

Students on an approved leave of absence are not registered in the program and will only be charged for sessions in which they are registered. For students registered in full-time programs, tuition and fees are assessed only during the Fall and Winter sessions. Students returning in the Summer session from an approved leave do not pay Summer session fees.

Funding and scholarships

Student funding will be put on hold for the duration of an official leave. Students must notify the [Graduate Office](#) upon returning from leave to resume registration and funding. Students who receive their sessional funding before a leave of absence begins may need to repay a portion of the payment they received. This can be avoided by submitting the necessary paperwork by the deadlines outlined above.

Agencies such as OGS and NSERC allow for medical leave. However, students on personal or internship leave must check the regulations of any scholarships they are receiving to ensure that the agency will allow a break for work experience and the deferral of payments.

A break in registration may also impact income tax calculations. Further, it may mean that any student loans will be immediately payable! Students should check with their loan agency about repayment regulations.

International students

International students should ensure they have an appropriate visa that allows them to be registered as students while they work at an internship, and that they have health insurance coverage during this period. International students should consult the [Graduate Office](#) as well as a licensed immigration advisor (such as at the [Centre for International Experience](#)). Failure to do so may have severe implications on immigration status as well as financial ramifications.

University Services

Students taking a leave of absence should note that their UTGSU health insurance is paid in two parts: Fall and Winter (which covers insurance for the winter and summer terms). Students returning from a leave at the beginning of the summer session will not have access to health insurance until the start of the fall session. Students should consult with the University of Toronto Graduate Student Union or CUPE concerning potential changes to their health insurance. Students on leave will generally not have access to university services, unless they pay to continue for them. Fees for this are listed in the leave of absence form.

Students on leave may be granted an exception to continue receiving physician care at Health & Wellness. All conditions below must be met before an exception is considered:

- The student received mental health care OR has been treated for the medical condition which is also the reason for the Leave at the Health & Wellness Center – UTSG within six months prior to the start of the leave.
- The student has valid health insurance, such as OHIP (or coverage from other Canadian provinces), UHIP or private insurance, that will cover physician visits, lab tests and hospital visits.
- The student has opted in to continued access to campus services.

7.5 Appeals

Graduate students may appeal substantive or procedural academic matters, including grades, evaluation of program requirements, decisions about the student's continuation in any program or any other decision with respect to the application of academic regulations and requirements to a student ([SGS General Regulation 10](#)). Students may not appeal admissions decisions, fees or the voluntary withdrawal from a graduate program. Academic appeals are heard only from students who are currently registered in the School of Graduate Studies or who were registered at the time the ruling or action was taken. Students must file an appeal within eight weeks of the initial decision.

With the exception of the Final Oral Examination, appeals are first initiated within the Department of Computer Science, with the [Graduate Department Academic Appeals Committee](#) (GDAAC). Students must first attempt to resolve the matter with the instructor or other person whose ruling is in question.

Should the matter not be resolved with that person and the student wishes to pursue it, the student must discuss it with the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies. Should such discussions fail to resolve the matter, the student may then make a formal appeal to the Chair of the GDAAC.

The decision resulting from the GDAAC may be appealed to the Graduate Academic Appeals Board ([GAAB](#)). The GAAB's decision may be appealed to the [Academic Appeals Committee](#) of the Governing Council.

7.6 University of Toronto Policy for Official Correspondence with Students

The University and its divisions will communicate with students primarily via email, and all students are required to obtain and maintain a University of Toronto email address. This is the only email address that will be used for official correspondence. Official correspondence may include, but is not limited to, matters related to students' participation in their academic programs, important information concerning University and program scheduling, fees information and other matters concerning the administration and governance of the University.

Students are responsible for maintaining and updating their contact information on the student information system ([ACORN](#)). This information must include current and valid mailing and permanent addresses as well as a University of Toronto email address. Failure to provide and maintain this information may result in a student missing important information and will not be considered an acceptable rationale for failing to receive official correspondence from the university.



8. Contact Information and Resources

Graduate Office

If you have any questions regarding administrative matters such as registration, enrolment, grades, fees, financial support and awards, please feel free to contact gradoffice.cs@utoronto.ca. The Graduate Office offers drop-in in-person meetings as well as virtual and in-person by appointment. Please make sure to bring your TCard.

The Graduate Office is open Monday to Friday 9:30 am – 4:30 pm.

BA4281, BA4237 and BA4239
Bahen Centre for Information Technology
Department of Computer Science, University of Toronto
40 St. George Street, Room 4283, Toronto, ON M5S 2E4

Departmental Website: <https://web.cs.toronto.edu/graduate/programs>

DCS Graduate Student SharePoint site: <https://utoronto.sharepoint.com/sites/ArtSci-DCS-grad>

Key student resources

ACORN – Student Web Service

The Accessible Campus Online Resource Network ([ACORN](https://www.acorn.utoronto.ca)) is your main online resource for updating contact information, student account information and student life resources. Access [ACORN](https://www.acorn.utoronto.ca) using your UTORid and password. Use ACORN to: defer fees; view tuition invoices and financial account; update contact information; order transcripts; print tax forms; and access information on housing, health and support and more. Visit www.acorn.utoronto.ca.

Arts & Sciences support for graduate student development

- Graduate Writing Support: <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/graduate/graduate-opportunities/support-graduate-student-development>
- Graduate Professional Development Resources: <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/graduate/graduate-opportunities/support-graduate-student-development>

Health and Wellness

- Health & Wellness: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/>
- Graduate Mental Health & Wellness Support: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/resources-supports/graduate-wellness-services-at-sgs/>
- U of T Telus Health Student Support (THSS): <https://mentalhealth.utoronto.ca/telus-health-student-support/>
- Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP): <https://people.utoronto.ca/employees/efap/>

International student resources

- SGS International Portal: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/international-portal/before-you-arrive/>
- The Center for International Experience (CIE): <https://internationalexperience.utoronto.ca/>

SGS supports for program progress and mentorship

- Graduate Centre for Academic Communication: <https://www.gcac.utoronto.ca/>
- Centre for Graduate Mentorship and Supervision: <https://www.cgms.utoronto.ca/>
- Centre for Graduate Professional Development: <https://www.cgpd.utoronto.ca/>
- SGS GradHub: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/gradhub/>
- Quercus (U of T's online course communication system): <https://q.utoronto.ca/>
- Student Guidelines for the Doctoral Thesis: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/current-students/program-completion/producing-your-thesis/doctoral-thesis-guidelines/student-guidelines-for-the-doctoral-thesis/>

Teaching assistantship resources

- CUPE Benefits plan: <https://www.cupe3902.org/u1-benefits>
- CUPE Local 3902 Unit 1 Job Postings: <https://unit1.hrandequity.utoronto.ca/>

- HR Self-service (payslips): <https://people.utoronto.ca/hr-service-centre/>
- Teaching Assistant's Training Program (TATP) at CTSI: <https://tatp.utoronto.ca/>

University of Toronto Graduate Student Union

- UTGSU: <https://utgsu.ca/>
- Health and Dental Plan: <https://utgsu.ca/health-and-dental/>

TCard

The TCard is the campus ID card, which provides access to services and facilities such as libraries, athletic facilities, exams, meal plans and printing services. Once students have their TCard, they can also enable their UTORid and U of T email address and access U of T WiFi. As of May 1, 2026, students can begin initiating their TCards by uploading a photo. More information is available at tcard.utoronto.ca.

University of Toronto Multi-Factor Authentication (UTORMFA)

UTORMFA is the University of Toronto's multi-factor authentication solution. It verifies your identity with a second factor, such as a mobile device or hardware token. Self-Enrolment for UTORMFA:

<https://security.utoronto.ca/services/utormfa/>

Computer Science — University of Toronto — Innovation that matters.



University of Toronto – Department of Computer Science
Bahen Centre for Information Technology
40 St. George Street, Room 4283, Toronto, ON M5S 2E4

Contact Us

gradoffice.cs@utoronto.ca

web.cs.toronto.edu/graduate