

2008-2009 Nuts and Bolts Guide for New MSCS Students
Department of Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science
University of Illinois at Chicago

www.math.uic.edu/gradstudies

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ABBREVIATIONS AND LINKS

ACCC - Academic Computing and Communications Center, SEL 2267;
<http://www.accc.uic.edu>

BSB – Behavioral Sciences Building, 1007 W. Harrison

Counseling Services Crisis Hotline – 312/996-5535 (6pm-10:30pm)

Counseling Services – 2010 SSB; 6-0919; www.counseling.uic.edu.

Disability Resource Center – 1190 SSB; 3-2183

Graduate College – 612 University Hall; www.uic.edu/depts/grad

Graduate Studies (MSCS) – 337-341 SEO; www.math.uic.edu/gradstudies

MGSA – Math Graduate Student Association; www.mgsa.math.uic.edu

MSLC – Mathematical Science Learning Center, 430 SEO; math tutoring center.

OIS – Office of International Services located in SSB; www.uic.edu/depts/ois

SCE – Student Center East (Student Union, East Campus), 750 S. Halsted

SEL – Science Engineering Labs, north side of Taylor at Halsted

SEO – Science Engineering Office (MSCS Department), 851 S. Morgan at Taylor

SES – Science Engineering South, 845 W. Taylor at Halsted

SINC – Student Information Network Center, 118 SCE

SSB – Student Services Building, 1200 W. Harrison at Racine

THINGS NEW STUDENTS NEED TO DO RIGHT AWAY

All new students are encouraged to see the Director (DGS) or Assistant Director of Graduate Studies (ADGS) who will welcome them to the University and the Chicago metropolitan area.

Contact the MSCS Graduate Secretary

New students employed as Teaching Assistants (TAs) must report to the Graduate Secretary (337 SEO) who will direct them to the Department's Academic Coordinator (331 SEO) to begin necessary employment paperwork.

Obtain a University Identification Card (ID)

All new students will need a University ID card and may obtain one after they register for courses. Once registered, students may go to the Student Services Building with a copy of their course registration and passport or driver's license.

Obtain a Social Security Number

International students who do not have a social security number must obtain one within 10 days of their arrival. The Social Security Agency is located at 1233 W. Adams St, just 4 blocks north of the Student Services Building.

Contact the Office of International Services (OIS)

Soon after arrival on campus, international students must report to the Office of International Services (OIS) to register with SEVIS. Registration with SEVIS is required before employment paperwork can be processed; proof of residency is required for SEVIS registration. Before going to OIS, students must see the MSCS Department's Academic Coordinator in 331 SEO to obtain a visa clearance form and to confirm that all necessary documents are in order. Students need to bring their immigration documents, financial support statements, and visa clearance forms with them to OIS.

OIS provides detailed information to international students during their course of study at the University. It is essential that this information is understood and followed. For information on visa status, employment eligibility and the I-20 form, international students should contact OIS or consult their website at www.ois.uic.edu.

MAILBOXES and FACILITIES

Mailboxes and Mail Bins

The Department's mailroom is located in SEO 304. All TAs in the MSCS Department are assigned mailboxes during the terms in which they are TAs. Other graduate students wishing to request a mailbox may do so by contacting the Graduate Secretary. Most mailboxes are shared with another graduate student, so students should take care that the mail they pick up has their name on it.

The mail bins located in the first floor lobby of SEO are convenient for mailing letters and sending campus mail. "Campus mail" is defined as letters and documents sent in special postage-free envelopes to departments and offices located on UIC's campus. Letters with proper postage as well as campus mail can be left in the Mathematics Department Office (SEO 322) for mailing. These pieces of mail are taken to the first floor bins twice a day.

Graduate Student Offices

Offices are assigned to graduate students holding teaching assistantships, research assistantships or fellowships. Assignments are posted on the Graduate Studies website at the start of each term; offices are located on several floors throughout the SEO building. Office assignments remain in effect until a change of support status occurs. Graduate students share offices. Students are expected to be courteous in the use of shared space and to make necessary accommodations among themselves.

Office keys are obtained from the main office (SEO 322). A \$5 refundable deposit is required.

Food Preparation and Accessibility

A microwave oven, coffee maker, and refrigerator are available in SEO 310 for faculty, student, and staff use. Vending machines are available on the first floor of SEO, west entrance. Other East Campus food options are available nearby in the Student Center East (Student Union), BSB, and UH buildings.

SEO 310 is to be used only for food storage and preparation. Graduate students, staff, and faculty are welcome to have lunch in SEO 300. Since SEO 300 and 310 are shared spaces, it is important that users leave them very clean.

Telephones

There is a pay phone on the first floor lobby of SEO where long distance calls can be made. Telephones in graduate student offices receive incoming calls; outgoing calls can only be made to campus extensions.

Libraries

Most of the University's library holdings in mathematics are located in the Daley Library, immediately north of SEO, on the south end of the second floor. Additional journals in mathematics and physics can be found in the Science Library (SES 3500).

Building Access

Students who have offices may wish to access the building in the evening or on weekends. The entrances to SEO are locked from 6pm to 7am, Monday through Friday. Students and faculty can obtain permission for 24-hour, 7 days per week building access by registering with Campus Security (see the Graduate Secretary). Once approved, students and faculty can gain access after hours using their University identification (ID) card at the east entrance to SEO.

To request building access, students will need to provide a copy of their University identification (ID) card to the Graduate Secretary who will submit the request to Campus Security. This process may take 7 to 10 days.

The 24-hour access privileges for SEO are usually granted for a calendar year and must be renewed annually. When students are no longer enrolled in the graduate program their access privileges cease.

FINANCIAL AID and PAYCHECKS

Eligibility and Application for Financial Aid

Only students accepted and enrolled in the Department's graduate degree seeking program are eligible for financial assistance from the Department. The Department offers Teaching Assistantships, Research Assistantships, Fellowships, and Tuition and Service Fee Waivers on a limited and competitive basis.

Initially, students apply for financial aid as part of the admission process. Once admitted, continuing students have the opportunity to apply for financial aid for subsequent semesters. Financial aid applications and deadlines are posted on the Graduate Studies website (see Resources for Continuing Students – “Financial Awards”). The application should be downloaded and submitted to the Assistant Director of Graduate Studies by the stated deadline. Details regarding eligibility for aid are stated in the Graduate Student Handbook.

Financial Aid Offers

In order to receive financial aid (TA or TFW) from the Department students must accept, in writing, an offer issued by the Director of Graduate Studies. Students should keep a copy for their records. Signed offers must be returned to the Director or Assistant Director of Graduate Studies by the indicated date; otherwise offers are no longer binding and may be reissued to other students. Students are responsible for understanding and meeting the contractual duties of the offers they accept.

Students who have problems performing contractual duties, or no longer wish to do so, are expected to contact the Director of Graduate Studies immediately for help and advice. Resignations must be submitted IN WRITING to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Financial Aid Contracts and Getting Paid

After a student accepts and returns a signed assistantship offer, the MSCS Academic Coordinator starts the necessary steps to add the student to the UIC Payroll system. This procedure involves a series of approvals outside the Department. Students should contact the Academic Coordinator immediately if there are any questions regarding the contract.

International students must see the Academic Coordinator as soon as possible to obtain their visa clearance form. The University **must** grant visa clearance within three days of the start of employment. Verification of SEVIS registration is also required for all new international student employees. International students are required to keep the Department informed of their visa status and any changes in status that may occur. Unless the Academic Coordinator intervenes, an incorrect visa status may not be noticed

until the last step of contract generation and the process has to start all over again. The net result is delayed paychecks or perhaps lost pay.

TAs are paid the 16th of each month for work performed the previous month. Payment is made through direct deposit to the student's bank account.

Research Assistantships

Faculty often receive grants with funds to support students as research assistants. Faculty select their own research assistants and report these arrangements to the Coordinator of Research Programs.

Frequently, students who are offered research assistantships already have teaching assistantships that they consequently may need to resign or wish to alter. If this is the case, students need to contact the Assistant DGS immediately to complete a Resignation/Release form.

University Fellowships

The Graduate College awards University fellowships to new applicants for the subsequent Fall semester. The MSCS Admissions and Fellowships Committee selects nominees. The names of the nominees are then submitted to the Awards Committee of the Graduate College, which selects the University fellowship recipients from nominees campus-wide.

Tuition and Service Fee Waivers (TFW)

The Graduate College awards a limited number of Board of Trustees Tuition and Service Fee Waivers (TFW) to our Department. The TFWs are similar to scholarships and do not require any type of work/service. These TFW waive the tuition and the service fee; all remaining fees are the responsibility of the student. TFW recipients must enroll in at least 12 credit hours if the award is received for the fall or spring semesters, and 6 credit hours if received for the summer semester.

Teaching and Research Assistants and University Fellows supported between 25% and 67% time, receive Assistantship TFW. These TFWs also waive the tuition and the service fee; all remaining fees are the responsibility of the student. Students holding assistantships for the spring semester automatically receive Assistantship TFW for the summer semester and must enroll in at least 3 hours if they wish to use the TFW. It may take 4-6 weeks for the TFW to appear on the student's account. Students should deduct the amounts listed as "Tuition" and "Service Fee" and pay the remaining balance by the deadline indicated. *Students who are on academic probation are not eligible for tuition and service fee waivers.*

TEACHING ASSISTANTS and FACULTY SUPERVISION

TA Teaching Assignments

The Assistant DGS creates the teaching schedules for TAs, in consultation with the DGS and the Associate Head for Instruction, and deals with routine problems related to job assignments. Most TAs teach the discussion sections on Tuesday and Thursday while the professor teaches the associated large lecture on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

The professor serves as the supervisor for the teaching assignment and will handle routine job related problems.

TAs can view their teaching schedules via the University website prior to the start of each term. TAs are responsible for accessing their teaching schedules on the web and contacting their professor before the first day of instruction.

TAs with 50% appointments will devote roughly 20 hours per week to their duties, including 2 hours per week tutoring in the Mathematical Sciences Learning Center (430 SEO); those with 25% appointments will devote half that. This MSLC is open five days per week and provides free tutoring services to students enrolled in the department's mathematics courses.

Standards of Professional Conduct

TAs are employees of the University and serve as instructors to their students. They are expected to conduct themselves as professionals, to treat their students with patience and courtesy, and respect. TAs are in a position of authority over their students and should protect themselves against claims of sexual harassment and conflict of interest by avoiding social or personal involvement with their students.

Sexual harassment is a form of behavior simply not tolerated by the University. It is very important for University employees -- in particular TAs -- to understand what constitutes sexual harassment and what to do if they become aware of it. The University's policy on sexual harassment is viewable on the Office of Access and Equity's website at <http://www.uic.edu/depts/oea/Harassment.html> . Possible cases of sexual harassment should be reported immediately to the DGS or the Office of Access and Equity (6-8670). The sexual harassment policy can be found in the Graduate College Catalog.

Duties and Responsibilities of Teaching Assistants

Specific duties and responsibilities of TAs:

- Remain on campus through the grading of final exams.
- Meet all classes on time and be fully prepared for each.
- Work assigned hours in the Mathematical Sciences Learning Center.
- Follow the procedures for Class Absence, outlined in the TA Handbook.
- Proctor and grade all exams, as directed by the faculty supervisor.
- Assist with the grading of all exams, quizzes, and homework.
- Maintain regular contact with the faculty supervisor to stay abreast of the course syllabus.
- Attend staff meetings for the course, as required by the faculty supervisor.
- Respond to messages from the professor promptly.
- Take attendance, listen carefully to students' questions, treat students with respect, and present topics in a manner consistent with the lecture.

Duties and Responsibilities of Faculty Supervisors

Faculty supervisors will guide their TAs in conducting their jobs well. Usually the faculty supervisor is the course lecturer/professor; in a few cases the course lecturer is the teaching assistant. Specific responsibilities of faculty supervisors include:

- Maintain weekly contact with their teaching assistants to communicate course progress and current responsibilities, and to discuss course related problems their teaching assistants may be experiencing.
- Help proctor and grade tests and the final examination.
- Assign test, final exam, and course grades.
- Direct the assignment of homework and design of quizzes.
- Deal with student complaints.
- Discuss policies regarding cheating and security of test materials and records with their teaching assistants
- Assist with the training of their teaching assistants.
- Complete the teaching assistant evaluation form.

Office Supplies

TAs are allowed to have necessary office supplies related to their teaching duties. Supplies can be requested from the staff in the main office, SEO 322.

Teaching Assistant Evaluations

The Associate Head for Instruction asks teaching supervisors to visit each class taught by the TA during the semester. Teaching supervisors will complete an evaluation of their TA's progress. This evaluation helps to identify problems that are usually typical and can be resolved during the course of the term. The Associate Head for Instruction is informed of any serious problems that may occur.

Teaching Assistant Coordinators

Every academic year a few experienced TAs are selected to be Teaching Assistant Coordinators (TACs) for the year. The job of a TAC is to visit the discussion classes taught by the other TAs. After each such visit, the TAC and the TA meet and discuss the TA's teaching. TAs are encouraged to use the TACs as a resource; TACs may be consulted on questions pertaining to classroom teaching and other instructional matters.

COMPUTERS, COPIERS, and PRINTERS

Obtaining Computer Accounts

Graduate students are entitled to university computing privileges. To set up a university account, understand its privileges and limitations, and to obtain basic information on the campus academic computer system, new students should visit the Academic Computing and Communications Center (ACCC) in SEL 2267 or check the website at <http://www.accc.uic.edu>.

Department Computer Equipment for General Use

The computer lab in SEO 736 is dedicated to MSCS graduate student use. To get an account or to learn more about accounts and services, follow the Computer Resources link from the math department web page at <http://www.math.uic.edu>.

Access to SEO 736 is restricted and requires special permission. To obtain permission, students must submit a copy of their University ID card to the Graduate Studies secretary with a note indicating that this is a request for 7th floor access.

Other University Computer Facilities

The Academic Computing and Communications Center provides other computer facilities located at various locations on campus for student use. Students are allotted \$15 per semester for printing. To find out more about them, refer to their website at <http://www.uic.edu/depts/accc/pclabs/u-print/index.html> or call the ACCC at 3-0003.

Copiers

TAs can use the copier in SEO 308 to duplicate materials related to their teaching or grading duties. TAs are limited to a maximum of 500 copies per semester and are responsible for any copies in excess of this amount. Students can obtain a copier access code by contacting the Graduate Secretary in SEO 337.

Department and University Printers for Student Use

There are printers in the Department for student use, as well as University computer printing facilities. Room SEO 308 contains a copy machine, laser printer, and a Thermofax for making transparencies. Access to the copier is restricted to assigned TA duties. Stop by SEO 322 if you need help using this equipment.

PLANNING for GRADUATION

Students may graduate at the end of any academic term. However, only one commencement ceremony is held each year (during the month of May). Deadlines related to graduation are very critical, and therefore must be planned for in advance. These deadlines are posted on the Graduate Studies and Graduate College websites. International students must also decide whether to request optional practical training (OPT) as they complete their degree requirements; interested students must attend an OPT workshop sponsored by the Office of International Services.

Graduation and Credentials Check

Students planning to graduate (receive a degree) must file an Intent to Graduate electronically by the stated deadline. Access to the electronic link is available via Web-for-Student.

Students applying for graduation should meet with the Assistant DGS to verify that all requirements have been met, or will be met, in time for graduation. Unless this credentials check is completed satisfactorily and in time, the student will not graduate. The Graduate College has final approval of the student's graduation.

Preliminary Examination and Thesis Defense

The Graduate College must approve all committees for the preliminary examination and thesis defense. As a result, students must contact the Graduate Secretary at least 30 days in advance of the intended date of the examination to obtain the required form and signatures. It is important to follow this procedure to avoid any problems. The preliminary examination must be taken within one year after completion of 64 semester hours of course work (which includes credit hours for the MS program). At least one year must lapse between completion of the preliminary examination and the thesis defense.

Thesis Preparation

Students can obtain a thesis manual outlining the guidelines for the preparation of a thesis from the Graduate College website. This manual is essential to follow. Questions about style, format and technical presentation should be discussed with the Graduate College

well in advance of typing the thesis. The Graduate College has strict deadlines for format approval and final submission of the thesis.

Letters of Recommendation

Graduating students seeking permanent employment can make arrangements for the Department to maintain a file containing letters of recommendations for the student and to send copies of these letters to potential employers upon request. The first 100 letters are mailed free of charge. Students interested in this service can obtain more information from the Graduate Studies website.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

International students need permission to work outside the University. Optional Practical Training (OPT) allows for this type of work. Students must contact OIS to attend an OPT workshop and to obtain permission to work. Students must *begin* OPT within 60 days of their program completion and *end* OPT within 14 months of program completion. Students must apply well in advance for their anticipated start date for employment. The INS requires at least 90-120 days to process requests for work authorization.

PETITIONS

Occasionally graduate students need to ask for exceptions to a policy concerning their graduate study. The mechanism for requesting an exception to a Graduate College policy is the Graduate Student Petition form. Requests for exceptions to a Departmental policy must be made in writing, following the procedures outlined below. In both cases, students should first contact the Graduate Studies staff to discuss the reasons for requesting an exception, to determine how best to present the case and to identify which signatures are required.

Petitions to the Graduate College

For exceptions to Graduate College policies, students must complete the Graduate Student Petition form and obtain an advisor's signature, followed by the signature of the DGS. The rules and regulations regarding Graduate College policy are described in great detail in the Graduate College catalog.

Petitions to the Department

For exceptions to the Department's rules concerning graduate study, students direct their written request to the Graduate Studies Committee, except in a few expressly stated cases where petitions are directed to the DGS. The Department's rules and regulations for graduate study are found in the MSCS Graduate Handbook.

Petitions to the Graduate Studies Committee are to be addressed to the chair of the committee. They must be signed by the student and must be accompanied by a written statement from the student's advisor that speaks to the merits of the petition.

GRADUATE PROGRAM DOCUMENTS

MSCS Graduate Handbook

Every graduate student is expected to have a current copy of the Graduate Handbook for the MSCS Department. Copies can be obtained from the Graduate Studies website or by

contacting the Assistant DGS. The Handbook describes the Department's graduate programs, requirements, rules and regulations concerning graduate study within the Department.

Graduate College Catalog

The Graduate College Catalog together with the MSCS Graduate Handbook comprises the rules and policies students must follow to obtain their degrees. The catalog is viewable on the University website or can be purchased in the University Bookstore.

Sample Comprehensive and Preliminary Examinations

Sample copies of the Master's Comprehensive Exams and Doctoral Preliminary Exams are available from the Graduate Studies website.

SUPPORT SERVICES for GRADUATE STUDENTS

Seeking Advice

Students seeking advice on course selection need to contact their assigned Faculty Mentor. The list of assigned Faculty Mentors is available on the Graduate Studies website. Students with questions on university or department policies and procedures, degree requirements, concerns about their academic program, or challenges in achieving the desired success should contact the Assistant DGS for guidance and referral.

Mathematics Graduate Student Association (MGSA)

All graduate students admitted to the Department are automatically members of the Mathematics Graduate Student Association (MGSA). The purpose of MGSA is to promote the interest of the Department's graduate students. A member of MGSA represents the organization at Graduate Student Council meetings and departmental Graduate Studies Committee meetings to keep graduate students informed of relevant proceedings. For more information and a list of the current officers go to the website at <http://mgsa.math.uic.edu>.

Counseling Services

Counseling Services offers assessment and counseling for students' personal, career, academic, or other concerns. Services are confidential and free of charge to enrolled students. Also available is the *InTouch Crisis Hotline* (312)996-5535 which offers trained staff to provide telephone crisis intervention, support, and referrals daily from 6pm-10:30pm.

GRADUATE STUDIES OFFICE HOURS

Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)

Students may meet with the DGS by scheduling an appointment. Regular office hours are typically held during the Fall and Spring terms; summer hours are held strictly by appointment. Obtain an appointment by sending an email to dgs@math.uic.edu.

Assistant Director of Graduate Studies (ADGS)

Students may stop by to see the Assistant DGS in SEO 339. Office hours are typically 9:00am to 4:00pm, Monday through Friday. Students are also encouraged to contact the Assistant DGS by e-mail.

Graduate Secretary

The Graduate Secretary is available Monday through Friday. Walk-ins are welcome.

Suggestions and Concerns

Students with comments regarding the Graduate Studies Program or Department should contact the DGS or Assistant DGS. The Department encourages comments from students who are most directly affected by its graduate program policies and procedures.

Students with questions regarding a course grade should first contact the professor, followed by the Department's Student Grievance Committee, if necessary.

Students with questions concerning the Master's Examination should consult the Graduate Studies website for procedures to follow. Concerns with preliminary examinations should be brought to the attention of the DGS for a decision or referral.