



**Master of Arts in Social Practice and
Innovation (MSPI)
Graduate Student Handbook**

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Purpose and Scope of the Handbook

This handbook is meant to answer critical questions about the Master of Arts in Social Practice and Innovation (MSPI) graduate program. All graduate students and graduate faculty are expected to be familiar with its contents. Because policies and procedures are evolving constantly, this handbook is not the definitive record of all University, Faculty and MSPI Program rules. Instead, it establishes general norms and guidelines. When in doubt, consult the Graduate Program Staff, the MSPI Graduate Program Director, and/or the School of Graduate and Professional Studies website.

Faculty of Social Science and Humanities Statement on Inclusivity: The Faculty of Social Science and Humanities is committed to building a truly inclusive educational community where faculty, students, and staff share the responsibility for promoting the values of fairness, justice, and non-discrimination, and for ensuring myriad voices, faces, and experiences are recognized and represented. We embrace and honour the dignity of individuals and groups, and believe that diversity, in all its complex dimensions, lays the foundation for academic excellence and creative learning. The Faculty is, therefore, dedicated to creating a welcoming and supportive campus culture and to challenging all forms of systemic discrimination experienced by historically disadvantaged groups, including but not limited to groups marked by race, ethnicity, sex, religion, age, disability, sexuality, gender identity and expression, and socioeconomic status.

Land Acknowledgement

Ontario Tech University acknowledges the lands and people of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. We are thankful to be welcomed on these lands in friendship. The lands we are situated on are covered under the Williams Treaties and the traditional territory of the Mississauga, a branch of the great Anishinaabeg Nation, including Algonquin, Ojibway, Odawa and Pottawatomi. These lands remain home to a number of Indigenous nations and people.

We acknowledge this land out of respect for the Indigenous nations who have cared for Turtle Island, also called North America, from before the arrival of settler peoples until this day. Most importantly, we remember the history of these lands has been tainted by poor treatment and a lack of friendship with the First Nations who call them home.

This history is something we are all affected by as we are all treaty people in Canada. We all have a shared history to reflect on, and each of us is affected by this history in different ways. Our past defines our present, but if we move forward as friends and allies, then it does not have to define our future.

MSPI Program Administration

The MSPI Graduate Program Director is responsible for guiding and managing all aspects of the program. The Graduate Program Assistant carries out essential administrative tasks (e.g., documenting student progress, managing teaching assistant and research assistant assignments). In addition, the MSPI Graduate Committee, which meets throughout the year, makes decisions related to the graduate program (e.g., curriculum decisions, policies and procedures).

At the start of every calendar year, current MSPI students will choose by consensus or by election one MSPI student to serve on the MSPI Graduate Committee. The Graduate Student Representative will serve two roles: 1) to attend selected MSPI Graduate Committee meetings addressing issues related to curriculum, major research projects, and/or any matters where student input would be helpful; and 2) to bring issues raised by MSPI graduate students to the attention of the committee. All MSPI students can bring any issues that they wish to have discussed at the committee level to the Graduate Program Director or the Graduate Student Representative.

2023/24 MSPI Program Administration:

MSPI Graduate Program Director (GPD):

Acting GPD: Andrea Slane (to June 30, 2024)

Graduate Program Assistant:

Jennifer Nichols

Bordessa Hall, Room 316

905.721.8668 ext. 3403

Email: SSHgrad@ontariotechu.ca

MSPI Graduate Committee:

Faculty Representatives: Andrea Slane (Legal Studies), Sasha Baglay (Legal Studies), Alyson King (Political Science), Shanti Fernando (Political Science), Gary Genosko (Communication and Digital Media Studies), Isabel Pedersen (Communication and Digital Media Studies)

Graduate Student Representative: TBD

MSPI Graduate Program Overview

The Master of Arts in Social Practice and Innovation (MSPI) is an interdisciplinary program at the intersection of studies of law, communication and digital media, and political science. Each of these disciplines provide different tools with which to identify, analyze, and initiate action on the complex challenges of our contemporary social world. Graduate students in the MSPI program will take courses across the three disciplines to conceptualize practices which address social problems and build collaborations with diverse communities. Addressing social problems through social innovation involving the creation, development, adoption, and integration of new and renewed concepts, systems, and practices are core elements of this approach.

The MSPI program culminates in a Major Research Project (MRP) aimed at public and community engagement. Through the MRP, MSPI graduates will be trained to formulate, develop and deploy effective and creative solutions to challenging and often systemic social and political issues in ways that can support social progress.

MSPI Program Map and Requirements

The MSPI Program requires 18 credits of course work as set out in the below program map, followed by 12 credits dedicated to the Major Research Project (MRP). Courses in the first semester are offered every year and are mandatory. Some courses in the second semester will change from year to year, and other options may be made available to fulfill the required 9 credits.

Program Map:

Year 1:

- Fall Semester:
 - MSPI 5010G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice I (3 credits)
 - MSPI 5030G Foundations for Social Practice and Innovation (6 credits)
- Winter Semester:
 - MSPI 5020G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice II (3 credits)
 - Two of the following:
 - MSPI 5040G Advocacy, Change and Social Practices (3 credits)
 - MSPI 5050G Communicating Law and Politics in Everyday Life (3 credits)
 - MSPI 5060G Information, Power, and Democracy: Constraints, Freedoms, and Ethics (3 credits)
 - MSPI 5070G Special Topics in Interdisciplinary Studies (3 credits)
 - MSPI 5080G Directed Studies (3 credits)
 - Approved cross-listed 4000U level courses
- Spring/Summer:
 - MSPI 5001G Major Research Project I (6 credits)

Year 2:

- Fall Semester
 - MSPI 5002G Major Research Project II (6 credits)

Graduate Course Descriptions

Core courses:

MSPI 5010G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice I (3 credits): Over the past decades, social science and humanities faculties, departments, journals, conferences and granting agencies, as well as governmental policy-making institutions and their respective stakeholders have emphasized the value of interdisciplinary research to social innovation and change. Interdisciplinary research blends two or more disciplines into a new or innovative approach. What interdisciplinary approaches are available to scholars and what theoretical and methodological challenges do they face when designing and undertaking interdisciplinary research? This is the first of a two term course, where students will examine a variety of methodological and theoretical approaches to interdisciplinarity. The course serves as an introduction to complementary and competing approaches to interdisciplinary research. Case studies across the disciplines will serve to highlight the ways in which different approaches serve as frameworks for research projects.

MSPI 5020G Interdisciplinary Theory and Practice II (3 credits): This is the second of a two term course. Having been introduced to a wide variety of interdisciplinary approaches to research in the first term of the course, students will construct their own interdisciplinary approach to a research question or problem arising from the points of contact between the three fields that anchor the program: Communication and Digital Media Studies, Legal Studies, and Political Science. Students will work together and independently to develop new intersections across these fields, working toward articulating informed, engaging, and creative social practices. By the end of the two terms, students will be prepared to undertake an interdisciplinary Major Research Project.

MSPI 5030G Foundations for Social Practice and Innovation (6 credits): This course provides students with the means to employ core concepts from the three disciplines that comprise the interdisciplinary program: communication, legal studies and politics. The course will consist of three blocks corresponding to these disciplines. **The communication component** examines foundational and current works in new media and communication studies. It focuses specifically on how current and emerging technologies may be designed and used by individual and collective actors for practices oriented to social innovation and transformation. **The legal studies component** engages legal concepts such as: the rule of law; human rights; constitutionalism and the Crown; sources of law including the common law, the civil code and Indigenous law; distinctions between criminal, administrative/public and private law; and relationships between domestic and international law. The course explores these concepts in the contexts of theoretical perspectives such as legal pluralism and multi-juridicality, critical legal theories, and structures of sovereignty and jurisdiction. **The politics component** explores the realm of politics by focusing on the nature and role of the state, and different forms of understanding society and power. Historical transformations in the role of the state in the context of globalization and their impacts on democracy, the economy and on the relations between politics, policy-making and society will also be considered.

Elective courses:

Choose two of the following:

***Note that elective courses will be offered on rotation, so not all will be offered in any given year**

MSPI 5040G Advocacy, Change and Social Practices (3 credits): This course asks how advocacy can be integrated into social action in order to prompt interpersonal, legal, political, and economic reform. Students will consider historical and contemporary examples of allyship and inter-community relationship-building enacted through discourse, community and grassroots organizing, lobbying, protests, and artistic works. They will learn key theories of solidarity and social change found in scholarly research and activist movements while investigating the impacts of collective action on law, policy, and personal and professional practice. Students will examine several specific areas of impact, such as Indigenous sovereignty, healthcare service provision, homelessness and poverty reduction, consumer protection, labour, and rights advancement of women and sexual minorities, Indigenous and other racialized and equity seeking groups. This course will afford students opportunities to explore 1) how to strategically mobilize against unequal access to power and resources, 2) how to support the empowerment of populations vulnerable to material deprivation and violence, and 3) how to create transformative and restorative alternatives to unjust conditions.

MSPI 5050G Communicating Law and Politics in Everyday Life (3 credits): In this course, students will develop critical and analytical skills in order to evaluate the nature of political and legal communication in everyday life. As the digital age allows instantaneous and ongoing narrativizing and framing of events and phenomena in real-time to both worldwide and highly specialized audiences, an in-depth understanding of narratives and frames, and how to create and interpret compelling legal and political narratives and frames, is becoming increasingly relevant. Students will learn to employ analytical approaches through framing theory and narrative analysis.

MSPI 5060G Information, Power, and Democracy: Constraints, Freedoms, and Ethics (3 credits): The means to amass and analyze data and the technologies of informational identity have been developing for more than a century, bringing us to the present moment where the internet, social media platforms, networked devices and other means of dataveillance have become integral to how we as citizens are addressed, assessed and characterized by governments, political parties, corporations and individuals. The centrality of information gathering practices to governance, election campaigns, social movement activism and marketing requires understanding of the existing and yet-to-be-determined legal, political and ethical tools to constrain misuse of information and other data while also facilitating and protecting the flow of information to address power imbalances. This course probes how information technologies link with contemporary politics and governance, including settler-colonial governance, and engages topical and contentious ethical debates

surrounding the historical transformation of democracy and consumer society in the digital age.

MSPI 5070G Special Topics in Interdisciplinary Studies (3 credits): Special topics will address recent conceptual and methodological advances or emerging issues and trends at the intersection of the disciplines participating in the program. Examples of possible special topics include: 1) existing graduate seminars such as *Global Artificial Intelligence Ethics*; and *Whistleblowing and Digital Disobedience*; and 2) cross-listed fourth year undergraduate seminars such as *Communication Law and Policy*, *Indigenous Law and Politics*; *Art and Law*; *Law and Environment*; *Media, War & Conflict*; or *Global Communication*.

MSPI 5080G Directed Studies (3 credits): Faculty permission may be given for supervised research projects, individual study or directed readings in a specialized area not covered in the regular course offerings. Students wishing to pursue a course of directed studies must formulate a proposal accurately describing the course activities, readings, and schedule, in collaboration with a qualified faculty member who is willing to serve as supervisor. This course may be only taken once.

Required Major Research Project courses:

MSPI 5001G Major Research Project I (6 credits): This two-term course provides a framework for the development and implementation of the Major Research Project (MRP), which is the culminating requirement of the degree program. Students will develop the theoretical and methodological approach for their MRP proposal. In the MRP proposal, students will explain the social problem addressed by their research question, and their plan to engage with a community or public outside of the university. The outward-facing component of the MRP must include a plan for social practice and/or innovation that involves a practical collaboration with a specific community or public. The proposal will set out the form of the collaboration and a communication format, for example, digital media advocacy, a public education campaign, an event or an exhibition. Upon approval of the proposal, students will then work with their faculty supervisor on the implementation of the project, which will be concluded in MRP II.

MSPI 5002G Major Research Project II (6 credits): Students at the second phase of the Major Research Project (MRP) will carry out the community engagement project approved in MRP I. Students will concretely execute their plan for social practice and/or innovation that engages community collaboration, and will compose the project's outcome in the communication format developed in the proposal (for instance, digital media advocacy, a public education campaign, an event or an exhibition). Students will write a summative report or academic article, as approved by their committee, that self-reflexively describes, explains and assesses the efficacy of the project's social practice and/or innovation.

Major Research Project (MRP) Process

Initial ideas for the MRP are developed over the course of the first two semesters, with the Spring semester being dedicated to finalizing a project proposal, in conjunction with the student's supervisor. During the summer and fourth (second Fall) semesters, the project is created and implemented. Courses taken during the first and second semesters provide students with the theoretical and methodological contextualization that can be used for the planned project.

In the MRP proposal, students will describe the design of the project and situate it within the preferred interdisciplinary framework. Proposals will be assessed by the student's supervisor and a second reader. Following proposal approval, students will work with their faculty supervisor to design and implement the project, document it, and critically evaluate its efficacy at achieving its social innovation goals. In the Fall term of their second year, students will submit the final project to their supervisor and the second reader as well as make a public presentation of the project to university and community audiences.

Additional support for relevant projects will be provided through the Digital Life Institute, which serves as a research hub for faculty research. The Digital Life Institute is rooted in FSSH but encourages collaboration across Ontario Tech and with external academic partners, focused on the study of new and emerging digital technologies and how they affect social, personal, cultural and artistic practices.

MRP Process Timeline

Full-time students are expected to complete their Master's degree in 15 months from the time they start the program. Adherence to the following timeline will help ensure steady progress through the program and timely graduation. The following is a general guideline.

	Term	Key MRP Activities	Milestones and deadlines
Year 1	Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify potential topic of interest Initiate research Work on a preliminary project description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify potential Research Supervisor
	Winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize a preliminary project description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit a preliminary project description to

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate work on MRP proposal with the Research Supervisor • Collect relevant literature for MRP proposal • Identify theoretical framework for MRP proposal • identify a Second Reader (in consultation with Supervisor) 	<p>MSPI Graduate Program Director by the end of January</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Supervisor assigned by February • Progress report due at the end of the semester
	Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop MRP proposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit MRP proposal by June 15 • Obtain feedback from Research Supervisor and Second Reader • Progress report due at the end of the semester
	Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on MRP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress report due at the end of the semester • Confirm the second reader no later than Sept 1
Year 2	Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize/implement MRP • Prepare public presentation on MRP • Incorporate feedback from the Supervisor, Second Reader and community partners (where applicable) into final project package 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit final project to Supervisor and Second Reader by October 15 • Public presentation of MRP by mid-November • Submit final project package by December 13

Finding an MRP Supervisor

Students will submit a preliminary project description (including a list of 2-3 potential supervisors) to the MSPI Graduate Program Director (GPD) by the end of January. Decisions regarding MRP supervisors will be confirmed no later than the end of the second week of February in their 2nd semester (prior to reading week).

The preliminary project description should be 750-800 words long and should include the following:

- Description of the social problem that will be addressed by their project and the community and/or public it connects with
- Description of the research question(s) or problem(s) that their project addresses
- Description of why this project matters to you / to the world
- Description of a social practice/innovation idea
- List of 2-3 potential supervisors for the project

Students will have several opportunities to find out about research areas of the MSPI faculty members and approach them for supervision. For example, the “Foundations of Social Practice and Innovation” course may feature some guest appearances by faculty. The Program will also usually hold a meet and greet event in the fall semester where MSPI students can get to know faculty who are available for MRP supervision.

All research supervisory appointments must be approved in the first instance by the dean or a designate of the home faculty in which the student is registered.

Selecting a Second Reader

A Second Reader provides feedback on the final implementation of the project (Fall term). The Second Reader must be rooted in a different discipline than the MRP Supervisor, and is expected to offer interdisciplinary input on the project.

Second Readers should be determined by the MRP supervisor and the student no later than Sept 1.

MRP Proposal

The proposal must contain:

- A description of the social problem that will be addressed by their project (½ page);
- The research question(s) or problem(s) that the project addresses (½ page);
- A review of relevant literature about the social problem, including an explanation of its causes, and an overview of the proposed or applied solutions (e.g., knowledge of existing social practices and/or innovations intended to solve the social problem (4-5 pages);
- A description of how the project advances social practices/innovations that respond to/aim to solve the problem (½-1 page);
- The theoretical approach to the research question (2 pages);
- The methodology for addressing and engaging with the social problem through the social practice and/or innovation (in the outward facing project) (2 pages);
- The social practice/innovation plan for addressing and responding to the social problem of a community or public (2-3 pages), which will include a plan for social practice and/or innovation that identifies and aims to solve a problem related to a specific community or public, locally, regionally, provincially, or globally; and, set

out the form of social practice and/or innovation (e.g., digital media advocacy, a public education campaign, an event, creative work, digital media product or exhibition).

NOTE: Students are not required to secure a community partner, but they are welcome to do so as relevant to their project. If work with a community partner is involved, consult with the research supervisor regarding the Research Ethics Board (REB) approval process. REB approval takes extra time and must be planned for early in the decision-making regarding the topic/project.

The proposal should be between 3500-4000 words (approximately 12-15 double-spaced pages, including references and graphics).

The proposal must be approved by the research supervisor and the second reader. Upon approval of the proposal, students will work with their supervisor on the implementation of the project, which will be concluded in the Fall term in MRP II.

Characteristics of an MRP

An MRP is not a traditional thesis. It is intended to be an action-oriented and outward-facing project. Each MRP will include a written component (akin to an article or a chapter) and an implementational component that outlines application of a proposed social innovation to a defined challenge or problem, normally located in the community or otherwise outside of the university. This outward-facing component may range from a highly conceptual proposal for change to an executed practical collaboration that shows an evident outcome in the form, for example, of an advocacy or public education campaign, supporting a community organization, or a creative work (e.g., an exhibition or digital media product). The MRP should also include a reflection on the limits of the implementation plan and its efficacy at achieving social innovation goals. Students are not required to secure a community partner for their project, but engagement with expertise within the community is strongly encouraged.

The final MRP should be between 9,000 and 10,000 words (approximately 35-40 pages double-spaced, inclusive of all supporting documentation, visualization or other strategies).

Students will make a public presentation of their project in November of the second year. If the project involves a community partner, the student should ensure that a representative of the community partner attends the presentation.

The MRP is evaluated based on the presentation and the final project package on a pass/fail basis. The final submission must integrate the feedback from the Supervisor, the Second Reader, and a community partner (where applicable).

December 13, 2024 Last day to submit a final thesis package to the program office to ensure graduation by the end of Fall semester.

Last day for faculty to submit Certificate of Approval for project/paper to the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies to ensure graduation by end of fall semester.

Responsibilities of MRP Supervisors

- Be sufficiently familiar with the field of research related to the MRP to provide guidance and/or be willing to gain that familiarity before agreeing to act as a MRP Supervisor.
- Be accessible to the student for consultation and discussion of the student's progress on the MRP throughout the two terms over which the MRP proposal and its execution are designed to take place (Summer and Fall).
- Assist the student in connecting with relevant community organizations or contacts to be involved in the outward facing aspect of the MRP.
- Respond in a timely, consistent and thorough manner to all work submitted by the student, with constructive and well-informed suggestions for improvement and continuation.
- Assist the student in securing a second reader for the MRP proposal and final written component.
- Endeavour to achieve consensus and resolve differences in the best interests of the student if the Second Reader has different expectations of the MRP project.
- Where applicable, appropriately acknowledge the contributions of the student in the supervisor's own work, such as presentations and published material, via joint authorship or acknowledgement (as appropriate based on the work completed by the student).
- Be sensitive to cultural and other factors which may influence the individual student's learning and research behaviour and experience.
- Make arrangements for continuity of the student's supervision before beginning a leave of absence.

Replacement of Supervisor

- Replacement of MRP supervisors is strongly discouraged, unless for obvious reasons (e.g., supervisor is ill and goes on leave)
- In cases where a student requests to be re-assigned, the GPD will meet with the student and the supervisor to determine if re-assignment is appropriate.
- Re-assignment of an MRP supervisor must be approved by the Dean or Dean's delegate, on the same basis as noted above regarding the original assignment of MRP supervisors.

Responsibilities of a MSPI Student

Student responsibilities include:

- a) Making a commitment and showing substantial effort, initiative and dedication to gain the background knowledge and skills needed to pursue the MRP successfully;
- b) Working with the MRP supervisor to develop a plan and a timetable for completion of all stages of the project and working assiduously to adhere to a schedule and to meet appropriate deadlines;
- c) Meeting regularly with the MRP supervisor and reporting fully and regularly on progress and results;
- d) Keeping their graduate program director fully informed regarding any matter relevant to the student's status in the program and seeking advice from their MRP supervisor, as appropriate;
- e) Meeting agreed-upon performance standards and deadlines of funding organizations to the extent possible when financing has been provided by the university or a funding agency, or through a contract or grant; and,
- f) Adhering to the standards of research ethics, health and safety, and respecting the requirements of academic integrity, honesty and professionalism. This includes, but is not limited to, acknowledging and crediting any source of ideas, assistance (e.g., tutoring or AI generated text), materials and/or data provided by others.

Regular meetings. Students and the Research Supervisor are expected to meet regularly (at least monthly) throughout the student's time in the program. These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss the student's progress in courses and the MRP, to help resolve difficulties, and to determine next steps in the research process.

Progress Reports. At the end of the winter, spring and summer terms of Year 1, the student and faculty supervisor will fill out a Graduate Student Progress Assessment. The completed forms should be sent to the Graduate Program Assistant, Cheryl Simmons.

Student-research supervisor conflicts

It is the responsibility of the university and its faculties to ensure that all graduate students receive appropriate and fair supervision. Due to the nature of the relationship between the student and research supervisor, conflicts may arise. In such instances, the first step must be to attempt to resolve the conflict informally between the student and research supervisor. If the matter can't be resolved, the graduate program director will

act as a mediator if and when needed. A student who believes the conflict has not been resolved should contact the dean of the student's home faculty. If the conflict persists, the student may pursue appropriate resolution through the dean of Graduate Studies.

Resources

Space

Graduate students will be provided with space to carry out their work. Each graduate student is not guaranteed their own office. Instead, students may be asked to share a desk or office space with others. If problems arise regarding space, they should first be brought to the attention of the Research Supervisor before the Graduate Program Director is involved.

When graduate students are assigned a TAship, they will be expected to hold office hours in an allocated TA office (unless otherwise specified by the course instructor). Karyn Douglas will request keys for students.

Equipment and Materials

A faculty laptop may be provided only to students who are TAs in a course and who are unable to perform their duties without it. Required supplies and materials for the TAship will also be supplied by the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities.

Some resources required for research purposes (e.g., equipment, software) may be provided by the Faculty, but the availability depends on the nature of the research project. For example, the following software applications are available for graduate students:

<https://itsc.ontariotechu.ca/services/software/software-availability-for-graduate-students.php>. In addition, Research Supervisors might supply some of the needed resources, but, in some cases, students may be required to subsidize their own research (e.g., purchase a laptop).

Email Account

All students will be given an Ontario Tech University email account. It is important to check this account frequently as it will be used for all essential university correspondence.

Additional Resources

Students are able to use the health, counselling, and recreational services at North and downtown campuses - for details, please check out [Student Life website](#). There is also a [library](#) on each campus. Copies of articles and books that are available through other universities can also be requested online via the [inter-library loan program](#) at no cost.

Contributing to the Graduate Community

In addition to the Master's in Social Practice and Innovation, the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities has graduate programs in Criminology and Forensic Psychology. We encourage students to develop relationships across all disciplines and cohorts. All graduate students are on the same team. The goal of graduate studies is to develop breadth and depth in an area of study; one way to accomplish this is to interact with students and faculty members who have different perspectives. Even recent university hiring practices underscore the importance of interdisciplinary approaches. Students graduating from FSSH have the opportunity to be at the cutting-edge in terms of research and training in this respect. Those who engage in interdisciplinary collegiality will certainly differentiate themselves from others in the workforce.

Norms are in place to ensure that students and faculty members make the most of the graduate programs. We expect that all students and Research Supervisors will attend Faculty events (e.g., presentations, seminars, meetings, workshops, social occasions). In order to develop a constructive graduate culture, it is important that all members of the program contribute. One of the easiest ways to have an impact is to be present. We also expect students and faculty members to create a positive, cooperative environment for research and learning. Clearly, academic misconduct and impingements on university policies and codes of conduct are unacceptable, as are more subtle forms of negativity (e.g., derision, intimidation, gossip).

As the graduate programs are relatively new, it is essential that members recognize the importance of mutual support. Success of each individual in this program will improve the quality of the graduate experience, the reputation of the program and, ultimately, the value of its degrees. Practicing collegiality will also prepare graduates to work in academic and non-academic settings, where cooperation and diplomacy are important.

Professional Development

The Ontario Tech University offers a number of workshops on graduate-level writing and presentation skills. The Graduate Professional Skills Program, initiated by the Office of Graduate Studies in collaboration with a number of other university departments, was created to help graduate students develop and enhance their career skills. Please visit the graduate studies webpage for the various workshops offered:

<https://gradstudies.ontariotechu.ca/grad-student-engagement/grad-pro-skills/index.php>

Writing Specialists are available for one-on-one support at The Student Learning Centre. They can help with citation/referencing, sentence structure/variety, etc. It is located at 61 Charles Street on the second floor; virtual appointments are also offered: <https://studentlife.ontariotechu.ca/current-students/academic-support/writing-and-english-as-an-additional-language/writing-room.php>. In addition, there are writing resources specifically for graduate students:

<https://gradstudies.ontariotechu.ca/grad-student-engagement/writing-resources/index.php>

Gaining Teaching Experience

Graduate students are encouraged to gain teaching experience over the course of their programs. Being a Teaching Assistant (TA), guest lecturing, or teaching a full course can expose students to a broad array of topics in the discipline beyond those which will be covered in their coursework or theses. It will also provide them with valuable experience explaining concepts, interacting with students, and assessing students' performance.

Typically, the majority of graduate students will be offered multiple opportunities to be a TA. Although students will be asked to provide their preferences for TA assignments, matches will not always be possible. Policies and procedures related to TAs (e.g., hiring priorities, workload, remuneration) are governed by the PSAC collective agreement. All graduate students should familiarize themselves with the terms of this agreement.

A TAship will be for a set number of hours; the specific allocation of those hours are at the course instructors' discretion. For example, being a TA might involve holding office hours every week, invigilating examinations, and/or marking assessments. It is essential that students meet with course instructors at the beginning of each semester to complete the Work Supervisor and Teaching Assistant Hours of Work Form and discuss assigned duties. Note that busy times as a TA will usually coincide with the times that grad courses are busy. It is important to be very well-organized and to have strong time management skills.

There may be opportunities for graduate students to provide a guest lecture in a course. Typically, students will be approached by the course instructor. There is no obligation for students to accept the offer, nor should they do so if it will interfere with their coursework or research.

Occasionally, students may gain teaching experience by actually teaching a course. This is called being a sessional instructor. Again, all policies and procedures are governed by a collective agreement. Only senior students should apply for sessional opportunities. Teaching a course is very time-consuming and should not be undertaken if it will interfere with progression through the program. However, the experience can be beneficial as it will offer students a sense of what to expect in future teaching careers.

Applying for Funding

Graduate students have access to a variety of financial support mechanisms, including the Ontario Tech University scholarships and bursaries, external awards (e.g., Ontario Graduate Scholarship Program, SSHRC), teaching, and research assistantships.

Students are strongly encouraged to apply to provincial and federal granting agencies for graduate scholarships.

Scholarship	Competition deadline
<p>Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS)</p> <p>Important: first year MSPI students are eligible to apply for OGS (their award must begin on May 1 of their first year of studies and they must have 2 more semesters of study left during the duration of the award; the maximum possible of the award is \$10,000)</p>	Early December

Unfortunately, first year MSPI students are not eligible to apply for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Master's award. That award requires students to be enrolled in at least 3 semesters of study during the duration of the award and MSPI students will only have 2 semesters left (spring/summer and fall).

FSSH Graduate Awards

Graduate Fellowship Award

The first year graduate students will vote on this award anonymously. The students will vote for the fellow student they believe to be the most collegial and supportive of their peers.

Outstanding Graduate Student Award

The recipient of this award will be determined based on the quality of their thesis or major paper and their GPA at the end of their second-year courses. Note this will be based on the six core courses that all students take regardless if they are completing a thesis or a major paper.

Student Paper and Project Competitions

Organization	Website
Canadian Communication Association - CRTC Prize for MA students	https://acc-cca.ca/index.php/prizes-prix/prix-crtc-prize/
Canadian Communication Association - Mahmoud Eid Graduate Prize	https://acc-cca.ca/index.php/prizes-prix/mahmoud-eid-graduate-prize-prix-mahmoud-eid-detudes-superieures/
Canadian Communication Association - Prize for Outstanding Graduate Student Essay	https://acc-cca.ca/index.php/prizes-prix/student-essay-essai-etudiant/
Canadian Society for Studies in Higher Education - annual award for the outstanding Master's thesis or project in Canadian universities in the area of higher education	https://csshe-scees.ca/awards/masters-thesisproject-award/
Canadian Law and Society Association - Graduate Student Essay Prize	http://www.acds-clsa.com/student-essay-prize.html

Conferences or Exhibitions to Consider for Showcasing Your MRP

Canadian Communication Association (CCA) Annual Conference at Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences:

<https://acc-cca.ca/index.php/conference/2023-conference/>

Canadian Society for Studies in Higher Education annual meeting:

<https://csshe-scees.ca/>

Canadian Law and Society Association Mid-Year Meeting and Annual Conference:

<http://www.acds-clsa.com/>

Other Thesis Awards

Three Minute Thesis

The [Three Minute Thesis](#) is a university-wide competition for all graduate students. Students must present their research, and its wider impact, to a panel of non-specialist judges within three minutes. Not only will participating students develop their presentation skills, but they will be eligible for monetary prizes at the university, provincial, and national levels. Typically, the Office of Graduate Studies will solicit participants during the Winter semester.

Outstanding Graduating Sociology Student

Each year the FSSH will nominate one thesis student for the Outstanding Graduating Sociology Student Award granted by the Canadian Sociological Association.