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# Departmental Orientation

7 September 2023

**J. Etele**

- Important contacts
- Responsibilities as a TA
- Responsibilities as a Graduate student with a thesis
- Campus services/Training opportunities



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## Important contacts

# People who can help you

- First point of contact for most graduate student issues should be **Janet Perras**, the graduate administrator, located in the main Mech&Aero Office (3135 ME)
  - course credits, registration, seminars, defences,...
  - if Janet cannot help, she can direct you to someone who can!
- For computer and network support **Neil McFadyen**, supervisor of computer operations, (3154 ME) is the person to consult
  - account issues, access to computer licences, various graduate lab spaces, ....
- If Janet or Neil are not available, you may seek help from **Irene Helder**, the departmental administrator
  - please be mindful that Irene can often be very busy as she handles issues for the entire department (both graduate and undergraduate student issues as well as faculty issues)

# People who can help you

- For less routine issues or those involving faculty, you may come to see me, the associate chair for graduate studies (2184 ME)
  - I am your advocate with respect to helping you succeed with your degree
  - If you are a coursework only student (MEng program) then my counterpart, Andrew Spiers is who you should see.
  
- For issues related to your research that involve various shared lab spaces or equipment, obviously your supervisor should be your first point of contact.
  
- Should your research require any departmental manufacturing equipment then you should consult **Alex Proctor**, supervisor of the machine shop, to co-ordinate your activities.



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## Responsibilities as a TA

# Responsibilities as a TA

- Run tutorials/PA sessions/Labs
- Provide feedback and mark assignments
- Assist with proctoring
- Be available for office hours/Respond to emails
- Read, complete and sign the 'Assignment of Duties' form on Carleton Central

# Role of a TA

- You represent part of the Carleton educational experience to the undergraduate population in a manner similar to professors
  - Although many of you were recently in the role of undergraduate student, you are now in a position of authority with respect to undergraduate students
  - Be professional and courteous at all times
  
- From this side of the fence, as someone who is now trying to help students learn (not simply graduate) it is important to:
  - Encourage students to develop *independent* problem solving techniques
  - Help students *understand* the problem, *not simply get the right answer*
  - Understand the problem/lab/etc that you are dealing with better than the students to whom you are trying to explain it (ask your supervising professor if you have questions, they will be glad to help).





# Running a Tutorial or Lab

## ■ SAFETY FIRST

- If you have any concerns/questions you can speak with **Prof. Laliberte**, associate chair of lab operations
- Speak with the appropriate technologist BEFORE running any experiment or equipment (see **Steve Truttmann**, supervisor of MAAE laboratories)
- Complete MANDATORY online training
  - Access for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
  - Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)
  - Violence and Harassment
- Complete any MANDATORY in person training (see Prof. Laliberte)
  - Laboratory safety
  - Biosafety
  - Laboratory supervisors



# TA Feedback and Grading

- Remember what you expected from your TA when you were an undergraduate student
  - Communicate your expectations clearly
  - Provide as many clear guidelines, marking schemes, rubrics, etc. as you can ahead of time
  - Be consistent with what the professor is telling the students so as to help provide a coherent learning environment
- Don't be afraid of highlighting when a student has done well
  - Highlight good approaches or excellent solution techniques
- Calibrate your feedback to maintain a supportive learning atmosphere
  - Indicate errors in a solution while also suggesting improved methods or techniques to try
  - Let the professor be the 'bad cop' (if one is even needed)



# Academic Integrity Issues

- If you identify a possible case of plagiarism defined as (see (<https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity>)
  - Submitting work written in whole or in part by someone else
  - Failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's work
- Provide a typical amount of feedback and grade the work as if you did not, in your judgement, think there was an issue of plagiarism
- Submit the work to the supervising professor explaining what you found
  - DO NOT:
    - write 'you cheated' on the report or accuse the student directly
- There is a process to be followed which protects and tries to provide fairness to everyone involved which the *professor* is responsible for following.

# Challenges a TA may face

- Try to prepare ahead of time by thinking about what you might do under circumstances where students:
  - are disruptive
  - arrive late or do not pay attention
  - complain about your feedback
  - ask you a question that you do not know the answer to
  - challenge your authority or instructions
  
- You may also want to consider cases where the professor teaching the course you are a TA for:
  - does not define your duties
  - tells you they are too busy to help you with learning the material
  - asks you to do something to feel is inappropriate/not within the duties as you understand them



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# Responsibilities as a Graduate student with a thesis



# The Graduate Calendar

- The graduate calendar defines the expectations/requirements of your degree and **MUST BE FOLLOWED**
  - You should all bookmark the graduate calendar and know the exact requirements to obtain your degree
- In addition to your degree requirements, the graduate calendar can be a useful reference for all the regulations surrounding your academics here at Carleton (transferring credit, examinations, thesis requirements,...)
- In cases where the calendar says 'with the approval of the department' this means you must speak with me

# Course Requirements

- You are expected to take 5 x 0.5 credit (one term) *graduate level* courses to obtain an MASc degree and 3 x 0.5 credit *graduate level* courses to obtain a PhD degree for most degrees offered by our department
  - Courses offered at the University of Ottawa Mechanical Engineering department can be used to meet these requirements
  - Courses offered at Carleton in other departments might be eligible to satisfy these requirements with the 'approval of the department'
    - In general, if an Arts or Policy student could take a course and expect to do well then the course cannot be counted as credit towards a graduate level *engineering* course requirement
  - Fourth year courses are very rarely used to satisfy these requirements with the 'approval of the department'
    - The intent of this exception is to accommodate students who are in difficult circumstances due to events beyond their control, not to simply allow graduate students to take undergraduate courses that are of interest/relevance to them

# Course Requirements

- In general, over 50% of your courses must be from the department issuing your degree
- If your supervisor requires that you take an undergraduate course to address a perceived deficiency in your background, this must be added as a condition to your offer or taken as a course that is extra to your degree (i.e., it will not count towards your 5 x 0.5 credit course requirement)
- Thesis students working on their thesis must be continuously registered in MECH 5909 (MASC thesis) or MECH 6909 (PhD thesis)





# Seminar Requirements

- For the degrees offered in our department the graduate calendar lists a requirement as 'Participation in the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering seminar series'
  - For MASc students this requires attendance at 10 seminars
  - For PhD students this requires attendance at 15 seminars
    - At least 50% of these must be official seminars offered by our department or the Mechanical Engineering department at the University of Ottawa
    - Attendance at a 1.5 hour session at a conference can be counted as 1 credit towards the required 10 (a maximum of 2 credits of the 10 can be from attendance like this)
    - Not more than 50% of seminars attended can be from those given by individual research groups



# Comprehensive Exam (PhD)

- For PhD students the oral comprehensive exam must be attempted before the end of your fifth semester of registration
- Your supervisor should arrange the examining committee, timing, and provide you with a list of resources related to the areas to be covered in the exam
  - The purpose of the comprehensive exam is to test a student's understanding of fundamental principles and knowledge in the *undergraduate* fields related to your field of research
- Following the comprehensive exam, PhD students must also pass the proposal exam based off their work so far and their PhD proposal document (max. 50 pages)

# Defence Requirements

- For MASc students you must have your thesis ready for review, committee members set, and date/time organized 3 weeks in advance of your defence date
- For PhD students the same is required but 6 weeks in advance of your defence date
- It is your supervisor's responsibility to organize the committee members and timing but ***it is your responsibility to ensure they have sufficient time to do this***
- It is your responsibility to be aware of all your program requirements (i.e., read the graduate calendar) in terms of required courses, deadlines, fees, etc.



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# Campus Services and Training Opportunities

- Health and counselling
- Graduate Students Association (GSA)
  - Health, dental, travel bursary
- Educational Development Centre (EDC)
  - Offers additional training and workshops
  - TA Skills Certificate



- Centre to assist students with disabilities at Carleton
- Students self-identify at the Centre and then accommodations are made with the course Professor
- Can arrange accommodations for:
  - Exams
  - Additional time, quiet room, assistive technology, etc..
  - Classrooms
  - Recorded lectures, note takers, priority seating
- Accommodations do not extend to assignments and labs
- Arrangements for late assignments are at the Professor's discretion

# Training Opportunities

- You are eligible for 5 hours of paid training:
  - Paid training can be completed by the end of March
  - Your completed hours can be found on Carleton Central
  
- TA Website: <https://carleton.ca/tls/teaching-assistants/>
  - Compliance Training is compulsory
  - Pedagogical training is voluntary, (available to all graduate TAs with a 65+ hour TA assignment)
  
- Graduate Student Website: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/>
  - Professional Development
  - Awards and Funding

# To Do List.....

- Make sure you have marked your attendance today
- Get in touch with your TA supervisor
  - Meet with the professor, TAs assigned to the same course
  - Understand and discuss your duties
  - Complete and sign the 'assignment of duties' form
- Get in touch with your thesis supervisor
  - They ultimately decide when you have completed your thesis studies
  - They are your best resource for help with course selection, reference materials, general advice with your studies
  - Most problems arise when students and supervisors stop communicating
- Have fun during your studies!





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# Questions