

# Biology Graduate Student Survival Guide



**A useful guide to Graduate Students in the Dalhousie  
Biology Department**

**Brought to you by your 2018-2019 BOGS Executive**  
<http://www.dalhousiebogs.ca/graduate-student-survival-guide.html>

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## A Message from BOGS

As the current executive members of the Biology Organization of Graduate Students (BOGS), we would like to welcome all new graduate students to the department, and to Dalhousie. The purpose of BOGS is to support the interests of graduate students within the Biology Department. This means that we represent student voices at departmental meetings (Committee Of the Whole - COW), and aim to provide many opportunities for all graduate students to intermingle.

This booklet is designed to be helpful as you make your academic mark at Dalhousie. We've included a myriad of details on how to settle in to your lab, your program, the university and Halifax! Explore it to find out who can help you and where to get even more useful information.

Graduate student life is much more than academics alone. Get to know the other students around you: in your lab, and in the rest of the department. They can often be your best support system when your experiments aren't working or when you just want to blow off some steam. An easy way to get to know your fellow grad students is to attend our weekly seminar series: **FISH** (Friday Informal Seminar Hour), and **BioBeer** (the social which follows), all in the 5<sup>th</sup> floor lounge (Life Science Centre - LSC) starting at 3:30 every Friday.

As a Biology grad student, you are automatically a member of BOGS. We hope that you become an active member, starting by coming to FISH and BioBeer every Friday afternoon. For those of you eager to become more involved, feel free to track down any one of your BOGS executives. We'd love to have your help!

Another group who supports you on campus is DAGS—the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students (<http://www.dags.ca>). They represent Dal grad students in university, provincial and national discussions and debates. They also own and manage The Muse (1252 Lemarchant Street) —a great place to relax and hang -out with other students and faculty.

On behalf of BOGS, we hope you have a successful time here at Dalhousie, and we look forward to meeting you at upcoming events. Remember that *we* are here to represent *you*, so please let us know how we can help.

Good luck and all the best,  
BOGS 2018-2019

**BOGS Executives**

<b>President:</b>	Brent Robicheau	br209559@dal.ca
	Beth Watson	beth.watson@dal.ca
<b>Vice-President:</b>	Andrea Bryndum-Buchholz	andrea.buchholz@dal.ca
<b>Treasurer:</b>	James Kho	james.kho@dal.ca
<b>Secretary:</b>	Chad Simmons	chad.simmons@dal.ca
<b>Social Coordinator:</b>	Noor Youssef	n.youseff@dal.ca
	Sarah Salisbury	sarah.salisbury@dal.ca
<b>BioBeer Coordinator:</b>	Hilary Mann	hilary.mann@dal.ca
	Sydney Bliss	sydney.bliss@gmail.com
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	Yana Eglit	yeglit@dal.ca
<b>Tuesday Coffee:</b>	Anik Obomsawin	anik.obomsawin@dal.ca
<b>Grad. Admissions Rep:</b>	Sarah Salisbury	sarah.salisbury@dal.ca
<b>Lett Symposium Coordinators:</b>	Maria Alejandra Soto	maria.soto@dal.ca
	Brent Robicheau	br209559@dal.ca
<b>BioBall Coordinator :</b>	Scott McCain POSITION OPEN	j.scott.mccain@dal.ca
<b>Intramural Coordinator:</b>	Scott McCain	j.scott.mccain@dal.ca

## Upcoming Events

### Every Tuesday:

Coffee and tea, 5<sup>th</sup> floor lounge (Biology Wing, LSC) – 10:30 am

### Every Friday:

Friday Informal Seminar Hour (F.I.S.H.), 5<sup>th</sup> floor lounge (Biology Wing, LSC) – 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

BioBeer – 4:30 pm, 5<sup>th</sup> floor lounge (Biology Wing, LSC)

Date	Event	Time	Location	More info
<b>Fall term</b>				
	DAGS O-week events		Dal campus	<a href="#">DAGS website</a>
	Welcome Tuesday coffee	10:30a m	5 <sup>th</sup> floor lounge	<a href="#">BOGS website</a>
	Faculty F.I.S.H. Talks, meet the Proffs!	3:30p m	5 <sup>th</sup> floor lounge	<a href="#">BOGS website</a>
	Welcome BioBeer	4:30p m	5 <sup>th</sup> floor lounge	<a href="#">BOGS website</a>
Sept. 21-23	Biology Graduate Students Retreat		Harrison Lewis Coastal Discovery Centre	<a href="#">Mike</a>
	Interdepartmental BBQ/BOGSBQ	4:30p m	TBA, LSC	<a href="#">BOGS website</a>
Oct 26	BioWeen	4:30p m	5 <sup>th</sup> floor lounge	<a href="#">BOGS website</a>
Dec 7	Holiday Party	4:30p m	5 <sup>th</sup> floor lounge	<a href="#">BOGS website</a>
<b>Winter term</b>				
January	Winter social event	TBA	TBA	<a href="#">BOGS website</a>
Feb or March	Curling	TBA	TBA	<a href="#">BOGS website</a>
Feb or March	Hockey game	TBA	TBA	<a href="#">BOGS website</a>
	BioBall	TBA	University Club	<a href="#">BOGS website</a>
	BOGS Annual General Meeting	4:30p m	5 <sup>th</sup> floor lounge	<a href="#">BOGS website</a>
	11 <sup>th</sup> Lett Symposium	TBA	University Club	<a href="#">BOGS website</a>

**And many more!!! Watch your inbox for event notices or check out the BOGS website for an up-to-date schedule**

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

- You can walk from the LSC to the Killam Library UNDERGROUND (i.e. out of the rain)!
- Dalhousie recycles paper, glass, and pop cans all over campus... and composts food waste in some locations.
- You can apply for travel grants from the [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#), [DAGS](#), and the [DSU](#) to participate in conferences.
- You can buy an International Student Card (ISIC) at Travel Cuts (in the basement of the S.U.B.) and get student discounts on air and train travel.
- You'll save money by bringing your own reusable mug to Tim Hortons or the cafeteria

## Guide for New Students

Welcome to the Biology Department! We are glad you chose Dalhousie for your graduate studies. Although our graduate program is designed to be as flexible as possible, it is necessary to have some rules to maintain high standards and consistency. This section is intended to help you become familiar with the most important procedures for you in the department. If you need a more detailed account of the rules and regulations, you will find them set out formally at the website of "[Biology Graduate Students Information](#)". This website is a great tool and contains different forms and information you will need for the program.

To reduce some of the uncertainties you may feel in starting a new program, we have listed below, the main events, milestones and important things to take care of during your time at Dalhousie. It may help to keep this as a checklist as you progress through your studies toward graduation.

- 1. Arrival on campus** - Usually in September, but sometimes as early as the preceding May. Early arrival allows you a head start on your thesis research but the academic year and formal classes (full year and X term (Fall)) do not begin until early Sept. While beginning in Sept. is most common, students may also begin in Jan., at which time Y term (Winter) classes also begin.
- 2. Society Fair** – A great way to get involved in the Dalhousie community is by taking part in some of the 250+ student societies. See what's out there by going to the society fair on September 13<sup>th</sup> (watch for updates on location in the Weekly DalNews emails). Learn something new, engage in social justice issues, connect with others of your faith, and make new friends at the same time!
- 3. Registration, Fees, and Payment** - This involves visits to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, the Students Services office, and the Registrar's office. To set up electronic payment, bring a void cheque to Payroll. These offices are in the Arts and Administration Building (A&A). Note that tuition may automatically be paid for by a scholarship you hold (e.g. NSERC), but only if the paperwork has been filed on time. Make sure you register for each semester using Dal Online. It is always key to register for REGN 9999 (everyone) as well as BIOL 9000 (Master's Thesis) or BIOL 9530 (Doctoral Thesis). [Doing this late will result in a delay in your stipend!](#)
- 4. Teaching obligations** - Contact the Teaching Assistant Coordinator (Allison Schmidt, Tel: (902) 494-1638, email: [aschmidt@dal.ca](mailto:aschmidt@dal.ca)) about TA-ing for the

upcoming year. Do this *as soon as possible* since the deadlines for applications are July 15<sup>th</sup> for fall and winter, and April 15<sup>th</sup> for Spring and Summer. Online application forms and available positions can be found at the <http://biology.dal.ca/> homepage. As positions become available, they will also be advertised next to the photocopiers on the second floor.

5. **Class selection** - Before classes begin, see your Faculty Advisor (usually your prospective supervisor, but for students outside the Biology Department, it will be your “internal” supervisor). Discuss the classes you need and those you want to take over the entire program, not just in the first year. The graduate calendar is available online at: <http://gr.cal.dal.ca/index.html>
6. **Interview** - In early Sept., you will be asked to arrange a time for an interview with the Graduate Coordinator ([Sophia Stone](#), phone: 902 494-4541, email: [sophia.stone@dal.ca](mailto:sophia.stone@dal.ca)). At this interview, your class selection and overall program will be finalized. In continuing years, you will be asked to have an interview with one of your stream chairs (discussed later) to review your progress.
7. **Healthcare**- When you register as a full time student you are automatically enrolled in the Student Union Health Plan and Student Union Dental Plan (this includes international students). However, if you register as a part-time student, or if you are a full time student beginning in January, you must OPT IN to the plan. If you already have health and/or dental coverage you may be able to opt out of the plan. More info is available at [www.studentvip.ca/dsu](http://www.studentvip.ca/dsu). International students should pay close attention to the opt out deadline for their mandatory health insurance, as it can save you a bundle if you have your own insurance or the [Nova Scotia MSI Card](#) (Medical Services Insurance). MSI is a provincially-funded program which provides hospital and medical care free of charge. It does not pay for prescription drugs or other health benefits covered under the DSU plan. International students can apply immediately to the MSI Card when they are hired as Teaching or Research Assistants at Dal. Otherwise there is a 12-month wait period. Click [here](#) for more info.
8. **Student card and Keys**-You can obtain your ID card at the Dal Card office (6230 Coburg Road). Your student card provides you with access to the Dalplex, a bus pass (**U-PASS, unlimited pass to use the bus** for the Fall and Winter terms), and library loaning privileges. Your bus pass has to be renewed at the start of each term. **Bus drivers will not accept expired bus passes.** Many stores, events, and activities in and around Halifax also have student pricing, just show your student card. You should also visit Biology Stores (1<sup>st</sup> floor, LSC) to acquire keys and signing privileges on your supervisor’s account, note that each key requires a \$10 deposit.



9. **Mailbox** - Visit Carolyn Young in the main Biology Department office to make sure you have a mailbox assigned. Supply an address for forwarding mail, if necessary.
10. **E-mail and Internet** - An e-mail address can be obtained by visiting [MyDal](#). See the people at the computer help desk in the Library to get your computer connected to campus wireless. They can also help you make an email alias, so that emails show up as your name instead of your NetID. Note that wireless does not work well everywhere in the LSC. In some case you may need to plug your computer to the network via Ethernet. Every computer that you wish to gain campus network access via Ethernet will need to be registered [here](#).
11. **Supervisory Committee** – A couple of months into your degree you should be considering whom you wish to form your Supervisory Committee (at least two people in addition to your supervisor, and at least half of the committee must be Dalhousie faculty). Your supervisor can help you with this decision.
12. **Admission to Candidacy (ATC)** - You will be sent forms for the ATC examination that normally takes place between Jan. and May of your first year (given a May or Sept. start). These forms will give instructions about the research proposal which must be submitted for the ATC. One of the purposes of this exam is to ascertain that your research plans and abilities are suitable for your course of study. It is also a chance to practice a written and oral proposal, and it affords you the opportunity to discuss your work with other researchers. Details concerning the format of the ATC exam and written proposal will be outlined in the Communications class, and usually by your supervisor. It may also be helpful to speak to other grad students who have already done their ATCs and can share their experiences and advice. Additional information can be found [here](#)
13. **Progress Report** - In April, at the end of all years (except your first), you will be notified of the need to prepare an annual Progress Report. This report, signed by your supervisor, must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator by May 15<sup>th</sup>.
14. **Preliminary Examination** – All Ph.D. students must take a Preliminary Examination by the 30<sup>th</sup> month after commencing the graduate program (ATC, for transfers), which must be completed 1 year before the thesis is defended.

**For more details, visit:**

<http://biology.dal.ca/GradInfo/index.htm>

For a better idea of what your final thesis defense is going to feel like, it's a great idea to attend a few from your fellow students. All upcoming defenses are posted on the bulletin board outside of the Biology Office on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the LSC.

Make an effort to break yourself out of the "biology bubble" and attend some presentations from other departments. A large part of the required course BIOL 5700 (Communication Skills) is to summarize and evaluate 10 academic presentations throughout your first 2 semesters. Why not step outside of your comfort zone and try a psychology or oceanography seminar? Many presentations are listed on the [Dalhousie Events](#) page, and individual department websites each have their own events calendars as well. Think outside the bubble!

## Living in Halifax as a graduate student

1. **Finding Housing-** Check online for accommodation online at [Kijiji](#), [The Coast Classifieds](#), [Places 4 Students](#). For short-term housing check the Dalhousie classified ads. They can be found by signing into [My.Dal](#) and searching under "Services".
2. **Transportation-** Halifax is a small city. If you live close to campus nearly everything will be within walking distance. If you aren't so lucky Halifax Metro offers bus service within the city and adjacent areas. During the fall and winter semester, students are usually entitled to the [U-PASS](#). If you are flying to and from Halifax, the cheapest transport to the airport is the [city bus](#) (\$3.25), which usually takes an hour from downtown Halifax to the airport.
3. **Groceries-** There are many grocery stores in the area including [Pete's Frootique](#), [Sobey's](#), and [Atlantic Superstore](#). Don't forget to bring your student card to Superstore or Sobey's on Tuesdays for a 10% discount. [Planet Organic](#) has a good selection of natural foods. You can also pick up local produce at the [Halifax Seaport Farmer's Market](#) on Wed/Fri/Sat/Sun.
4. **Fun Stuff-** Check out [The Coast](#) for guides to the best music, food and activities Halifax has to offer. There are too many options for places to eat, drink and/or just hangout. The Coast is a great resource for finding fun things to do.

Halifax also has a great arts scene. Check out [Neptune Theatre](#) and the [Dalhousie Arts Centre](#). Don't miss [Nocturne](#) in October, Halifax's annual art at night event!

The music scene in Halifax is nationally renowned. The [Halifax Pop Explosion](#) showcases over 150 bands at 18 venues over 5 days from October 16-20.

Beyond pop, the Coast's [Music Section](#) has all of your needs covered from opera to grunge to folk. Check it out!

If you're also interested in playing music, check out the [Halifax Music Coop](#) for subsidized lessons and the opportunity to play in an orchestra, jazz band, sing in a choir and more!

5. **Food on Campus-** In addition to the Cafeteria and Tim Hortons found in the LSC, you can grab a bite at [The Grawood](#), King's Cafeteria, The Grad House, the SUB Cafeteria, [the Loaded Ladle](#) (vegan food by donation), My 3 Cousins and many others on campus.
6. **Physical and Mental Wellness-** Nothing can be more important than keeping a healthy mind and body through your degree at Dalhousie. The university and the city have countless opportunities for recreation, fitness, and counselling services and we'll list just a few select items here that current students in the Biology department find particularly engaging.

**[Intramurals and Clubs](#)** – Dalhousie offers 17 recreation clubs, from scuba diving and sailing to cricket and fencing! If you're interested in a particular intramural, let your BOGS Social Coordinator know and we'll do everything we can to set up a team, and even cover registration fees!

**[Yoga](#)** – Halifax is chock full of yoga studios and they're always sporting deals on month-long trial memberships. If you've never tried it but you'd like to give it a go, Lulu Lemon on Spring Garden Rd offers free in-store Yoga sessions on Sundays at 10:30am. [Moksha Yoga also offers 5 CAD drop in lessons on Sundays at 6:00pm.](#)

**Rock climbing** –Have you ever noticed those crazy folks climbing around on walls and rocks with pads and ropes? There's a reason they're grinning from ear to ear. Climbing can be an incredible workout, but you're having so much fun you hardly notice. If you'd like to give it a try, the [Rock Court](#) in the basement of the Dalplex is a great place to start. Climb Nova Scotia is also a superb resource for both new and experienced climbers, taking people out to local bouldering areas on Thursday nights and arranging various instructional clinics. Check out the [CNS website](#) for more details.

**Counselling and Psychological Services** – Pursuing graduate school is an incredible opportunity to strength your knowledge about what you love in science and will bring you rewarding experiences for your personal and professional life. However nobody implies that living as a grad student is easy. You will face challenging and sometimes stressful situations You are

not alone and there are resources readily available incase you need extra help from a professional hand. Find more info [here](#).

7. **Writing Centre** – Would you like to improve your writing skills? Is English your second language and want to receive some advice to master that final paper or dissertation? The Writing Centre offers free service of one-on-one consultations. More info [here](#).
8. **Study skills/tutoring** – Personal coaching and free workshops are offered to you to buster your academic performance while you are at Dal. Info [here](#). Check your email and the weekly DalNews for upcoming workshops and courses through the Writing Center, Center for Learning and Teaching, and more.

# Key Players for the Graduate Program in the Biology Department

**(i.e. who you should go see when you have an issue...)**

## **Graduate Coordinator ([Sophia Stone](#))**

- Progress Reports
- Appeals/Grievances/Problems
- Establishes Curriculum (with Graduate Directorate)
- Conducts Evaluations, Interviews New Students in September
- Generally Assists Graduate Students (e.g. concerns about examinations, deadlines, supervisors, theses)
- **Phone : 494-4541**

## **Graduate Secretary ([Carolyn Young](#))**

- Organizes Interviews, ATCs, Preliminary Exams
- Compiles Student Records from September Interviews
- Prepares Lists of Graduating Students
- Initiates Progress Report Preparation
- Informs Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) as necessary.

## **Chair of Admissions and Scholarships Committee ([Daniel Ruzzante](#))**

- Deals with Applications
- Allocates Scholarship Funds
- Ranks Students for Scholarships
- Prepares Information Brochure

## **Executive Assistant ([Carolyn Young](#))**

- Takes Minutes at Graduate Directorate Meetings
- Prepares Biology Graduate Class Offerings
- Prepares Graduate Class Calendar entry
- Keeps Registrar/FGS informed of changes to curriculum
- Updates Procedures Manual

## **Stream Chairs (A: Mark Johnston, Marty Leonard and Paul Bentzen; C: Jonathan Wright, Paul Bentzen, and Sophia Stone)**

- Interview Continuing Graduate Students in Sept.
- Chair ATC Exams, Set Examiners for ATC and Preliminary Exams

**Chair (Paul Bentzen)**

- Appoints Module Coordinator (Joe Bielawski) and Instructor for Communications Class (Daniel Ruzzante), with consultation of Graduate Coordinator (Sophia Stone)

## Important Phone Numbers

The area code for all of Nova Scotia is 902

### **BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT**

Biology Dept. Office	P: 494---3515, F: 494---3736
Department Administrator	Julie Walker, 494---1059
Graduate Coordinator	Sophia Stone, 494---4541
Chair of Grad Admissions Committee	Daniel Ruzzante, 494---1688
Module Coordinator	Joe Bielawski, 494---7844
TA Coordinator	Allison Schmidt, 494---1638
Special Topics Course Coordinator	Sophia Stone, 494---4541
Stream Chairs	
A: Population Biology	Mark Johnston, 494---8005
	Marty Leonard, 494---2158
	Paul Bentzen, 494---1105
C: Cellular and Molecular Biology	Thomas MacRae, 494---3736
	Paul Bentzen, 494---1105
	Sophia Stone, 494---4541

### **DALHOUSIE**

Faculty of Graduate Studies (Rm. 314, A&A)	494---6727
Dean of Graduate Studies	Marty Leonard, 494---2158
Personnel Payroll Services (1st floor A&A)	494---3700
Killam Library Circulation	494---3617
Kellogg Library Circulation	494---2479
Personal Computer Purchasing Centre	494---2626
Computer Help desk (Killam Basement)	494---2376
Dal Health Services (Howe Hall)	494---2171
Counseling and Psychological Services (SUB)	494---2081
Dalplex (Athletics Centre) Information	494---3372
Dal Women's Centre (6286 South Street)	494---2432
Dalout (LGBT society: SUB)	494---2190
Black Student Advising Centre	494---6648

Tiger Patrol (Walk Safe/Drive) 494---6400

Free Walk---Home or Shuttle Bus from 6pm---12:30am

Shuttle schedule: <http://fm.dal.ca/security/tigerpatrol.htm>

**GETTING SETTLED**

Off---Campus Housing Office (SUB Rm. 407) 494---3831

Residence (Campus Housing) Office (Howe Hall) 494---1054

[Metro Transit \(Bus Info\)](#) 490---6600

Casino Taxi 429---6666

[Airporter shuttle to Halifax Airport](#) 873---2091

Airline Taxi& Limousine Service 456---1265

**INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS**

[International Student Services](#) (Killam Library, Rm. G25) 494---1566

(check the [site](#) for a useful handbook!)

**English Tutoring (English as a Second Language)**

[TESL Centre \(St. Mary's University\)](#) 420---5691

[tesl@stmarys.ca](mailto:tesl@stmarys.ca)

[International Language Institute](#) 429---3636

[study@ili---halifax.com](mailto:study@ili---halifax.com)

**International Food Stores**

Japanese and Korean food market (7018 Chebucto Rd.) 455---8383

India Groceries (2585 Robie St.) 423---6339

Mid---East food center (2595 Agricola St.) 492---0958

**Lost?! Dalhousie Campus map:**

**<http://campusmap.dal.ca/>**

**\* Be sure to visit these two useful websites \***

**Graduate Student Info, Biology Department Website:**

**<http://biology.dal.ca/GradInfo/index.htm>**

**BOGS Website:**

**<http://dalhousiebogs.ca/>**