

Transcript

Orientation Webinar for Graduate Students arriving at McMaster in Jan 2019

SLIDE 2

Welcome everyone!

JC:

I'm JC and I am a PhD student in Physics & Astronomy and a co-chair of the International Graduate Student Advisory Group, in short, IGSAG. IGSAG is made up of international graduate students from various faculties and associations, and McMaster staff from the School of Graduate Studies. We work together to identify gaps and improve the overall experience for international graduate students at McMaster.

ANDREA:

I'm Andrea Cole and I am a staff member in the School of Graduate Studies. As part of the Graduate Student Life Team, my role here includes supporting International Graduate Students alongside my colleagues. We are speaking to you from the School of Graduate Studies office in Gilmour Hall, on the McMaster main campus. McMaster University is located on the traditional territory shared between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Anishinabe Nations and recognized through the Dish with One Spoon wampum agreement. We encourage everyone to learn about this treaty, about the relationship between Indigenous and settler peoples in Canada, and in particular about McMaster University's connection with the nearby Six Nations of the Grand River Territory.

ANDREA:

Our goal for this webinar is to walk you through the steps to get started as a grad student at McMaster.

These are the topics we'll cover today (on screen). Hopefully, if you've made it this far, you are an international grad student who will be starting in January. Please note that if you are a domestic student, you may still find this relevant, so we hope you'll stay with us. You are one of approx. 100 grad students who will begin a program in January, and among 4600

graduate students at McMaster overall. More than 25% of all graduate students at McMaster are also international students. We recognize that all of you have worked hard to be here and it requires significant effort to move to a new country to study, and we are so happy that you've chosen McMaster as your destination!

JC:

McMaster University has partnered with iCent to provide you with an informational app. This is available for all for all new international grad students, so if you have accepted your offer of admission to grad studies here, you will also receive an email directly from icent with login instructions.

The app can be downloaded onto your cell phone and contains helpful information specific to you as a McMaster Grad Student, including all of the content in this webinar and more!

SLIDE 6

Let's Review some important dates and Deadlines:

- Registration is open from Nov 29 and you have until Dec 13 for on-time registration. There IS a late registration fee of \$50 if you don't complete your registration on time.
- The deadline to pay tuition is Jan 1. Good to know about this: you actually have until the second to last business day to pay your tuition before accruing interest. So that means you have until Jan 30th to pay your account in full.
- Classes will begin AFTER Jan 2. It will depend on your program, so please check with your program for the first date and your course schedule.
- The McMaster campus will be completely closed on the dates indicated above for various provincial and national holidays.
- Just a reminder – all of this information is available on the School of Graduate Studies website. Just go to gs.mcmaster.ca These details are all available on the icent app as well.

SLIDE 7

JC

We're not certified immigration consultants and can not comment on study permit issues or visa requirements. But, all of the information you require can be found on the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) website posted here.

Study Permits are required by all international students to study in Canada. You might also require a travel VISA or something called an eTA to enter Canada. Please make sure you have all your required documentation. If you aren't sure, please refer to the IRCC website - it may take some time but all of the information can be found there.

Once you arrive on campus, you need to present your study permit to EITHER your department OR the School of Graduate Studies (GH212) and maintain a valid study permit until your program is completed.

Just a side note: after you present your study permit at SGS, you can pick up your student card.

SLIDE 8

ANDREA

Now that we've covered Key Dates and Travel Documentation, let's talk about your Arrival and Getting Settled in Hamilton and at McMaster

SLIDE 9

JC

First things first, since you are arriving in January, be sure to pack warm layers of clothing for those flying here (such as hat, scarf, warm socks)

It 45 minutes to 1 hour to get to Hamilton from Pearson Airport.

There are several options for getting to Hamilton from the airport directly:

- Taxi Limo - most convenient, door to door service
- Airways Transit is also door to door but you may have to wait longer to depart
- GO bus cheapest and esp. good if you don't have too much luggage.
- Make sure you get on the bus that's going to Hamilton 😊
- Free Wifi at the airport to check the schedule (so you don't have to go outside).

SLIDE 10

ANDREA

You will not find campus housing for grad students here, but you can secure housing through the private market. We are providing some links here, but please note these are online public classified ads, and we don't endorse any one site. These are some common sites where students find accommodations (also found in the icent app).

- macoffcampus website also has a 'roommate finder' function and, you can search by type of housing (shared accommodation, grad student house etc).
- kijiji and craigslist are also common ways to find rental accommodation here
- Facebook - if you have facebook, this is also a good tool to use. Look for the "McMaster Student Housing Postboard" Facebook page and the International Grad Student (igsa) Facebook group to post and browse the housing you are seeking
- There is also a volunteer-run program here called Symbiosis, that will match you with a local senior citizen (age 55+). You can live with the senior in their house and pay affordable rent in exchange for helping them out around the house with things like groceries, housework, or simply companionship. You can find out more on the Symbiosis facebook page or the school of graduate studies website.

SLIDE 11

ANDREA

When you are renting a place in Canada, it is common for a landlord to ask you for these items listed here:

You will probably be asked to complete an application form, provide references, sign a lease agreement, and provide both first and last month's rent on the first day of your tenancy

It is important to know your rights as a tenant and some rules around tenancy in Ontario. For example, you have a right to ask for receipts for your rent from your landlord; this will become especially important if you are paying with cash, as well as for when you file your Canadian income taxes. You can follow the link at the bottom to learn more about the rights and responsibilities of both landlords and tenants.

SLIDE 12

JC

We encourage you to get to know the city of Hamilton.

There is something for everyone here: arts scene, cafes, restaurants, and of course waterfalls and other natural areas

In addition to the neighbourhoods surrounding the university, check out the Hamilton Waterfront Trail as well as the nature.mcmaster.ca site for more ideas

SLIDE 13

ANDREA

If you are a Full-Time Graduate Student – you can ride the bus for free!

After you get your student card (more on that in a minute), you can get your bus pass at the Campus Store. It is the green card pictured here.

When you are getting on a bus, you can simply tap this card onto a **PRESTO** device each time you board a bus. You can watch this short video to learn about Presto.

Presto can be used outside of Hamilton as well; however, your bus pass does not include these costs so make sure to load up your card before getting onto transit other than Hamilton Transit. You can load your card online, or on-campus as well, in the little kiosk known as ‘the Compass’.

SLIDE 14

ANDREA

How to get your student card:

- Before you arrive, you will need to upload your photo to Mosaic in order to get your student ID card.
- If you do not do this before you arrive, your student card may not be available immediately.

To set it up:

- Sign into mosaic and access your Student Centre.
- In your student centre, under the personal information section you will see a link for demographic data. Click on the link for Demographic Data and this will open up a tab where you can upload your photo by clicking on the ‘upload photo’ button.

- With your photo successfully uploaded into mosaic, you can now pick up your student card from the Grad Studies office – that's Gilmour Hall Room 212.

SLIDE 15

JC

Typically can find food items from all over the world at supermarket and farmers market, so you don't need to pack food items unless there are a few special items from home. Do note that if you are landing on Dec 25, 26 or Jan 1 - these are holidays in Canada and stores will be closed.

Dishes/kitchen and other housewares items are easy to acquire dollar store shop

Bedding – personal call. Can be expensive but also bulky to pack and carry
Winter clothing can be purchased here, but make sure you have layers of clothing in your bag that you can put on quickly at the airport when you arrive. A warm hat, scarf, gloves, and warm socks can go a long way. The temperature may be well below zero degrees when you arrive in January. You are going to need to get a warm winter coat and boots. Protect your ears!

SLIDE 16

ANDREA

You need a Social Insurance Number, or, "SIN" to work in Canada. This includes working as a Teaching Assistant (TA) or any other employment. Getting your SIN is one of the first things you should be doing once you arrive. You can't get your TA pay without it.

It does not cost any money to obtain this number but you will need to present your passport and study permit for the application.

There are several ways to get your SIN:

- You can ask for SIN at the airport if you are arriving at Pearson.
- Go to City Hall in downtown Hamilton (Fridays only).
- Visit a Service Canada office (further away but accessible by bus).
- Book an appointment with International Student Services through oscarplus.ca. There are certain times in January when you can receive the SIN on campus.

- Please note that SIN for International Students does expire, it's based in the date that your study permit expires. So be sure to keep both up-to-date.

SLIDE 17

JC

Setting up a bank account is another important thing you need to do when you arrive in Canada. This is very important so that you can set up direct deposit to receive your TA and scholarship pay.

Please note that our office does not endorse any one bank, however we have a list of the 5 major Canadian banks here. Banks mostly all have special offers for students, and most will have information for international students on their websites. All of the banks are regulated in Canada and have to follow the same finance rules, so it's really just a matter of researching the different offers and picking a bank that is close to your home or the school.

SLIDE 18

JC

To open a bank account, you will need to bring with you:

- Your Passport
- Your Study Permit
- Something which states your new Hamilton address (ex: a bill, copy of your lease, etc.).

SLIDE 19

Andrea

In order to get paid by the university, you need to Enroll in Direct Deposit. This means that your pay will be deposited directly into your bank account. As soon as you have your bank account, you will set this up within your Mosaic Student Centre or with Human Resources, or both. Visit our website for detailed instructions on this.

SLIDE 20

JC

Getting a cell phone in Canada is pretty simple but you need to choose a provider.

In order to sign up for a plan, you will need a credit card and the provider may ask you for deposit at first. This deposit will come back to you within couple months to 6 months. Having a cell phone can be expensive in Canada so you need to decide on your plan carefully.

We do not endorse any company and there is often a trade off between good service but very expensive and cheaper but limited service.

Talk about how to choose. And how expensive everything is in Canada to get started.

SLIDE 21

ANDREA

If you haven't figured this out by now, moving to Canada can be quite expensive. There are a lot of initial start-up costs that you can expect. A website called "expatistan" is quite up to date for estimating your expenses in Hamilton

If you are curious as to when you will be paid through TA or Scholarship funds from the university, check your payment schedule listed on the Grad Studies website under resources, also listed here.

SLIDE 22

JC

As a student, you can get student discounts at multiple places so make sure to take advantages of these deals.

- Multiple grocery stores give you 10% discount every Tuesdays.
- Shoppers Drug Mart in front of the University gives you 20% discount on Thursdays.
- There is also a very cheap store for fresh produce, which is located on 60 Ewen Road. For vegetables and fruits, this will probably be the cheapest place but they only accept cash so make sure to bring cash and a shopping bag!
- Located in Jackson's Square downtown Hamilton, there is also the Farmer's Market and an international grocery store called "Nations", which has pretty much everything.

SLIDE 23

ANDREA

We hope we've made you excited about life in Hamilton with the great deals for students but we have to sort out some documents before that. It is important to register online before the deadline. You can follow this link to navigate you through this process.

There are three terms in an academic year and you will be registering for Winter and Spring Terms at this time.

SLIDE 24

JC

After registration, you will see some tuition fees showing up on your account page. As international students it may not be possible for you to pay your fees by the deadline (i.e., if you have not yet arrived in Canada and been able to open a bank account yet, and/or, if you are waiting for your first Scholarship or TA Payment (more on that in a minute).

Please know that you will not be charged interest before the last business day of the month. So effectively, you have until Jan 30, 2019 to pay your tuition and fees. By this time, you will have a bank account set up and will be receiving scholarship money.

In addition to the Tuition fee, you will need to pay supplemental fees as well, which include fees for Graduate Student Association and health insurance.

SLIDE 25

ANDREA

To pay tuition fees, we recommend transferring funds from your bank to McMaster.

The most convenient method will be to transfer from your Canadian bank account but if needed, it is possible to transfer fund from a bank outside of Canada as well.

Before making a payment, you will need to confirm how much you need to pay.

- To do this, go to Mosaic and log in to see your student account.
- Your Student Account shows all financial activity as it pertains to your education at McMaster. (payments received, scholarships, bursaries,

purchases and other miscellaneous financial activity) all of this will show on your Student Account in real time.

- Monitor your student account regularly to ensure it is in good status.
- You will **not** receive a bill or invoice
- You **can** print statements directly from your Student Center online.

SLIDE 26

JC

Your offer letter will contain your funding sources and amount.

All of the information for charges and payments can be found in these links.

The sooner you can provide your direct deposit information to the university, the easier it will be for getting paid.

Make sure to introduce yourself to your department secretaries, they will let you know if you have to do extra paperwork

SLIDE 27

JC

Just to orient you to the community you will be a part of, here are some helpful groups and networks that you are sure to interact with at some point as a grad student:

Each faculty has student representation on the GSA in addition to the executive GSA members. All members in the GSA council are elected. You will be paying fees to support GSA so make sure to get involved!

Also, your program may have its own internal groups and associations. Be sure to check the website of each group for more info and office hours

SLIDE 28

JC

Your community also includes International Student Services (ISS) located one floor below Grad Studies in Gilmour Hall. ISS processes your UHIP health insurance coverage and organizes immigration lawyer presentations. There are some excellent grad student-run organizations at McMaster. Several worth mentioning here: iGSA , EGS, SciGSA, ACGSA. Global Hamilton Connect (off campus)

Chances are good that you will have interaction with several of these groups throughout your time here. There are lots of ways to get involved in leadership and volunteer service with these groups as well.

SLIDE 29

ANDREA

One other group that may be of interest to some students is the GradParent Network. If you have children or other family responsibilities during grad school, you can join the GradParent Network to find information, community, and support. Connect with other grad students who are parents through our families facebook page, or come out to a GradParent event

SLIDE 30

ANDREA

In addition to know where to go for socialization, it is important to know where to go to take care of your health.

We have a dentist, pharmacy and a medical clinic on campus.

The clinic is called the Student Wellness Centre, and it is located in the basement of the Student Centre. It is by appointment, and you can go there if you get sick.

The cost is covered under UHIP health insurance, so you don't need to pay the doctor directly. We will cover more about UHIP in the next slide. There are two dental plans on campus, depending on whether you are a TA or not, and we will cover this in detail in an upcoming slide.

SLIDE 31

JC

For any questions, please contact ISS.

- Always carry the UHIP card on you.
- UHIP is mandatory for ALL International Students and their accompanying dependents
- Students are automatically enrolled in UHIP, however if you have a spouse or children accompanying you, please contact International Student Services to set them up.
- If you are a TA, you can apply for a \$200 rebate every academic year through CUPE!

SLIDE 32

SLIDE 33

ANDREA

Your UHIP covers costs like hospital and doctor visits, as JC outlined. You also have benefits through your GSA Student Care Plan, which can cover the cost of therapies such as psychological counseling and prescription drugs. However for these student care plan benefits, you may need to pay out of pocket first, submit your expense, and you will be reimbursed later

Regarding Dental Care: The campus dentist is familiar with the various dental plans, so you don't have to pay up front, but you can also find a dentist close to your home.

If you are a TA, you will use the CUPE plan for dental.

If you are not a TA, you will use the GSA plan.

SLIDE 34

JC

A final tip for or those of you who will be involved in a research-based program and working directly with a faculty supervisor. You will be working with this person for anywhere between one to six years, so it's a good idea to start things off right.

Grad Studies has created this resource to help you understand the expectations of that relationship. We recommend reviewing this document and a few other links here, so that you are aware of your rights and responsibilities as a grad student, as well as that of your supervisor and department.

SLIDE 35

ANDREA

A few on-campus events we want to let you know about coming up in the new year:

On January 17 at 12 noon, Grad Studies will be offering a workshop designed to provide practical information to incoming first year Master's or PhD students on graduate level writing and communications. You'll learn about the differences between undergraduate and graduate level writing, how to professionally communicate with your supervisor, colleagues, and other students, and about the different genres of writing you may

encounter in graduate school. More details will be sent to you by email after this webinar.

SLIDE 36

JC

On Tuesday, January 22 at 9 am, our colleagues at the MacPherson Institute will be hosting a workshop for International graduate students who are interested in teaching. If you are uncertain about what teaching in a Canadian classroom might look like, please consider this optional, free workshop which will cover what a teaching assistant is, strategies for planning a lesson, and more. The workshop will also have a question and answer period led by a group of experienced international teaching assistants. More information, including how to register, will be sent to you by email.

SLIDE 37

ANDREA

We have a fun event for you to take part in, after the hard work of getting here and settled at McMaster.
Please join us on January 22 at the Phoenix for Friends & Fries – a welcome event for all new Graduate Students starting in January (describe event – opportunity to meet us and each other face to face). *WATCH FOR REGISTRATION DETAILS BY EMAIL*

SLIDE 38

ANDREA

We want to acknowledge our fellow grad student and staff colleagues who contributed to the content of this webinar. Thank you to all of the advisory group members listed here!

JC

Andrea and I are going to join the other panelists now, to help answer any questions or comments you have through the chat box. The panelists will remain online here for a few more minutes, so even though the formal presentation is over and you won't hear our voices, you can still connect using the Chat feature.

SLIDE 39

ANDREA

This concludes the webinar slide presentation. You can contact us through the School of Graduate Studies and the iGSA email addresses listed above. Don't forget to check the iCent app for all of this info and more, and gs.mcmaster.ca if you want to download the slides from this presentation.

JC

We'll continue chatting with you online, but formally we want to wish you safe travels from wherever you are arriving from, and we're excited to see you in January!

Take care everyone!