

**Guidelines Governing Direct Transfer from a Master's
(MA, MES, or MSc) to the PhD Program
Updated: July 6, 2017**

There are two mechanisms whereby students can be admitted to the Ph.D. program in geography. The first of these is completion of a Master's thesis and its successful defence following which upon application the student may be granted admission to the Ph.D. program. The second mechanism allows exceptional students directly into the Ph.D. program (from a Master's program in Geography or a related field at Laurier or Waterloo) without first completing all of the Master's requirements. The following guidelines will be applied in consideration of applications for such a transfer, and in the case of WLU-based students, are aligned with WLU's policy:

<https://legacy.wlu.ca/calendars/section.php?cal=3&s=867&ss=3649&y=75>

1. The request must be initiated by the student in the form of a letter to the Associate Chair of Graduate Studies (UW) or the Graduate Coordinator (WLU) before the end of the third semester in the Master's program. The letter from the student should describe why they want to fast-track to the Ph.D. level, including outlining the circumstances and career aspirations that warrant this consideration (e.g., an exceptional research opportunity that aligns with the student's interests, funding opportunities, an emerging research question which can best be addressed at the Ph.D. level, etc.).
2. The applicant must have already demonstrated oral and written communication ability appropriate for Ph.D. level student. This will be demonstrated by:
 - i) A Ph.D. research outline.
and one or more of the following:
 - ii) An approved Master's thesis proposal.
 - iii) A paper published or accepted for publication in a peer reviewed journal.
 - iv) Other evidence of academic productivity (e.g., refereed conference presentation) and promise.
3. The applicant for the direct transfer must have demonstrated a superior academic record at the graduate level. For the purposes of these guidelines, this means that the student has achieved an A/85% average in at least 3 graduate courses and at least an A-/80% in all graduate courses. A copy of the student's undergraduate and graduate transcripts should accompany the request. (Course Work Master's candidates will not be considered for direct transfer.)
4. The request should be accompanied by:
 - i) A detailed letter of unqualified support from the supervisor which provides evidence and explanation as to why this is an exceptional student who warrants consideration for fast-tracking to the Ph.D. level. Recognizing that there are many shades and facets to the word 'exceptional', this letter could comment on (but does not need to be limited to) aspects ranging from academic performance, research productivity and promise,

publishing track record or potential, initiative/independence, and possibly laboratory or field research-related capacities. The letter should indicate how the current Master's research program could readily be broadened to the Ph.D. level, and that this represents an excellent research opportunity for the student. The funding implications of fast tracking should be discussed (e.g., what are the implications for the student's current Master's-level funding arrangements, and how will the student's costs be covered as a Ph.D. student).

- ii) A letter of support from a committee member or from an academic familiar with the candidate's research potential. The letter should comment on the candidate's suitability for fast-tracking to the Ph.D. program.
5. An informal meeting with the candidate to discuss the transfer request may be conducted by the Waterloo-Laurier Joint Program Graduate Committee.
 6. The request will be considered by the Waterloo-Laurier Joint Program Graduate Committee who will make a recommendation either way to the Associate Chair of Graduate Studies (UW) or Graduate Coordinator (WLU). The Associate Chair/Graduate Coordinator will convey the recommendation to their respective Associate Dean/Dean of Graduate Studies.