

Dear grads,

Congratulations on your admission to UofT Law!

As we ourselves know that coming to the grad program can be not only exciting but also stressful, especially for those of us who are not yet Torontonians, the Graduate Law Students' Association has made this short guide. The guide includes tips that will help you get rid of some of your worries, and also suggestions that can ease your way into the program and Toronto.

Whether you are doing a LL.M. or a SJD, international student or a local – you can find something in this guide that can be good for you!

The guide is based on current students' personal experience and opinions.

Good luck,  
Graduate Law Students' Association

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1. Housing

- It is totally normal for you to find a good place to live within a week or less from your moving date. You do not have to panic if you do not have a place to live yet.
- If you are eligible for student family housing in UofT check it out. It's close, cheap, and in kept in good condition. It is for students living with a partner or with one or more children.
- Good sites to look for places include: [www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hs/housing-finder](http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hs/housing-finder), [www.kijiji.ca](http://www.kijiji.ca), [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org) and [padmapper.com](http://padmapper.com) (aggregates listings from multiple sites).
- Massey College is a stimulating interdisciplinary community that offers housing as well as social, academic, and networking activities.

2. Phones

- Make sure to get a plan that does not limit you to calls and texts in Ontario alone (if you will be contacting people outside of Ontario).
- Cell phone plans usually cost at least \$30/mo at minimum, can be more for a smartphone with data etc.

3. Scholarships, funding, and tuition

- Try to apply Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) as early as possible, even if you have not been admitted yet. Yes, international students are eligible for it!
- English Language and Writing Centre hold free consultation sessions that can help with submissions for funding. <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/Writing-Centre.aspx>
- SJDs – you will be required to apply for scholarships, and some of the deadlines will be as early as September or October. It is a good idea to start working on your application to Vanier, Trudeau, and SSHRC scholarship early on. You can find some good advise in the following guides:
  - Vanier: <http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/files/2014/06/vanier-cgs-guide.pdf>
  - Trudeau: <http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/files/2014/06/trudeau-foundation-scholarship-guide.pdf>
  - SSHRC: <http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/files/2014/06/Guide-to-the-SSHRC-Doctoral-Process-2015-2016.pdf>

- Check out these websites for more info on scholarships and fellowships:  
<http://www.law.utoronto.ca/admissions/graduate-admissions/graduate-program-fees-and-financing/graduate-fellowships-and-awards>,  
<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/Scholarships-and-Awards.aspx>,  
<https://ulife.utoronto.ca/opportunities/list/type/award>
  
- 4. Course selection
  - Intensive workshops: you can only take one per semester.
  - LL.M. candidates are eligible to select most courses at UofT Law, but there are some courses not open to LL.M. candidates.
  - LL.M. candidates may audit one course during their study, so choose wisely. For SJDs it is one per year.
  - For LL.M. candidates wishing to use LL.M. courses to satisfy their NCA requirements in order to practice in Ontario, they may plan to choose Canadian Administrative Law and Business Organizations to satisfy the core NCA requirements. For other electives should you be assigned to complete, please consult with the NCA.
  - When choosing your courses, look at how you will be evaluated for each course and consider whether the overall workload is manageable. For example, if you choose 4 classes that are all assessed by a research paper this will be extremely busy at the end of the term. (Note, generally “final paper” means that you don’t have to do any or much external research but “research paper” is a paper based on your own original research, which generally takes more time).
  - Many classes require you to write a series of “comments” or other short written assignments during the term as well as a final paper or exam - again if you have a lot of classes all requiring a lot of these assignments this will be a heavy workload. If in doubt the grad program staff can advise whether you are taking on too much.
  
- 5. Academic tips
  - You can apply for an “alternative form of evaluation”, e.g. one long paper instead of a series of seminar responses. Or, you can do take-home instead of 2- or 3-hours in-class exam. Do take advantage of it. Subject to faculty approval.
  - English Language and Writing Centre holds free consultation sessions that can help with any writings - from papers, through thesis to abstracts for conferences and grant applications. <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/Writing-Centre.aspx>

- The LLM program gets busy, if you are required to do presentations or short papers for classes during the term and you can choose when to do it, try not to leave it until the end of the term. This will make the end of term less stressful and allow you to focus on final exams or papers.

6. Favourite places in Toronto/around UofT

- Best coffee shop for studying on Queen West: RSquare
- Trinity Bellwoods park
- Hyatt rooftop bar
- the Distillery District - cool shops, bars and restaurants
- Hanlan's Point - nude beach
- Don Valley - amazing park
- Church Street - gay village
- Crews and Tangos - gay bar with drag shows every night
- Graffiti Alley - amazing murals
- Kensington market - an all around cool market
- The Art Gallery of Ontario is free Wednesday nights
- The Royal Ontario Museum is right next to the law faculty and has student rate memberships
- Explore the U of T campus! Trinity College, University College and Hart House all have beautiful courtyards and/or gardens. There is also a lot going on other than academics, for example musical performances and art shows. The colleges also have dinning halls, in which you can have lunch even if you are not a member of the college.
- 5 buck lunch – every now and then Hart House offers a two-course \$5 lunch. Keep an eye out.
- El furniture warehouse/ Queen st. Warehouse – pub/restaurant in which all food is \$5 and pretty delicious. Only downside, there's a line and it is pretty noisy.
- Also, there is this blog about free stuff in or around the campus:  
<http://blogs.studentlife.utoronto.ca/lifeatuoft/tag/free-food-at-uoft/>

7. Favourite libraries

- Bora Laskin (of course)
- Graham Library
- Gerstein Library

- The Music Faculty library is right next to the law faculty and has an extensive collection of discs and scores.

8. Transportation

- On the weekends one-day pass is good for 2 adults
- Monthly metro pass is \$112 for students, to use the student pass you need to have a TTC student ID card which costs \$7 (you can't use your U of T student ID). You can buy the ID card at TTC stations or there are sessions on campus on specific dates where you can get it. There are sometimes checks on the TTC and if you are found without the right ID you can be fined.
- If you're close by, biking might be the best form of transportation

9. Driving in Ontario and Canada

- Bring an international driving license, otherwise you might not be able to drive in Ontario after a couple of months
- Driving permits change from province to province
- If you rent a car, make sure to ask if there is a mileage restriction, as sometimes they publish "unlimited" and actually mean 3000-4000 km
- You can also get a membership in one of the car sharing companies like ZipCar or Car2Go and pay per hour. Annual membership is cheaper for UofT students and can be as cheap as \$20.

10. International students

- When you arrive at Pearson International Airport for the first time you will be directed to a visa officer. Make sure that the visa states you are allowed to work here, subject to some limitations. Also, right across from the visa desk there's a 'Service Canada' desk - go there and get a SIN (social insurance number). You can't work without it, banks and phone companies want it too.

11. Parenting tips

- Apply/register as soon as possible to daycare and child care subsidy.
- Check carefully course requirements and choose wisely to maximize the time that will be available for your studies.

- If you are interested in a course with a 24 hours take-home exam, try asking the professor, before the beginning of the term, to make it a 48 hours take-home exam for all the students so that you'll actually have time to write the exam.
- For normalization sake and while trying to make sense of it all try socializing with other student who are parents and other families in your neighborhood.

#### 12. Banking tips

- Get a bank account in one of the big banks that have many branches, like TD or RBC, because if you withdraw money from an ATM that's not your bank you will be charged.
- In 2015-2016 the only bank that offers free e-transfers (ie. direct bank-to-bank online payments through e-mail) as part of their student banking package is RBC (up to 5 per month). Other banks charge around \$1.50 per transfer.

#### 13. Thesis tips

- There can be some flexibility in the length of the thesis. For example, if you enrolled in the long thesis program but decide you'd like to take some more classes and write a slightly shorter thesis this can often be arranged. Subject to faculty approval. Talk to the grad program staff and your thesis supervisor. (Note however that it's generally not possible to officially transfer into the long thesis program from the short thesis program).