

# A Guide to Surviving Your First Year as a Psych Grad

First of all, let me welcome you to our not so little graduate program in Psychology. They say everyone in psychology is a little bit crazy and if you're entering grad school that means you might also be a little bit masochistic! (but that's ok, we like that). Actually, it means you're motivated and that's exactly what this department needs. It needs students that are not only here to take classes, to teach, and to research, but also to make connections with people that will last a lifetime.

Speaking as a student in her 6<sup>th</sup> year here at U of M, I can't stress enough the importance of community. You can't get through grad school alone. Not only does the department offer an excellent Psychology program, it offers a network of support that will enrich both your academic and social lives. It is this sense of community that will help keep you motivated during Winnipeg's notoriously cold winters, when the rigors of graduate life begin to wear you thin. It is my goal to enrich and expand upon this network this year as President of G.A.S.P. (Graduate Association of Students of Psychology).

For those of you new to the University of Manitoba, I hope this guide will help ease your transition. This guide was compiled from facts taken from the university's [website](#) as well as opinions and advice generated from the experience of myself and others at the University of Manitoba. While offering many practical tips to university living, this guide is also a humorous resource, and humor in university is essential to healthy living.

If any of my comments leave you wondering if I'm joking, I am. If you have to ask yourself, then I promise you it is sarcasm. This is another thing you will pick up in graduate school if you haven't already. So read on, take from this what you will and if you end up thinking it is garbage at least recycle it. I don't want trees to have to die because I'm not funny enough.

Thanks to all my friends who helped me put this together!

Kathleen

## Getting Your Student Card/ID

Your ID card is essentially your access key to all student services, including library access. Further, you can deposit money onto your card which you can then use for photocopying. You'll also need to show your student ID during exams, or if you choose to purchase a gym pass or food service meal plan.

At this time of year getting an ID card can be a pain but they generally get people through pretty quickly. If you take the elevator (or stairs for fitness conscious people) to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of University Centre, you can't miss the Student Records Office. At one end of this office is the ID centre where they will take your picture and make up your card as you wait. It is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. On September 7 and 8 the ID Centre in Student Records will be closed. During these two days, a special ID Centre will be operating in the Manitoba Room, 2nd Floor, University Centre from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

## Claiming Your Computer Account/E-mail.

<https://pasweb.cc.umanitoba.ca/webapp/gu/claimid/>

Equally important is to claim your email/computer account as soon as possible. All the department emails come through this address. The above link takes you to step by step instructions for how to do this. You do require your student # in order to do this, hence the placement of this advice following the blurb about your student card. You'll be given a password which is often incredibly hard to remember, but your password can be changed by going to the computer accounts office in the old engineering complex. All of this information is provided on the [U of M Academic Computing & Networking website](#).

Once you claim your account you receive both a U of M email and internet account on the CC/Unix system, in addition to the INS account by the same name. The INS account is needed in order to login to PC's in the ACN computer labs on campus. The CC mail account can be checked from any computer on the Internet at <http://www.umanitoba.ca/webmail>.

Although I wouldn't personally recommend it, you can also use your CC account to access the internet from home. You are provided with 30 free hours of dial-up internet access time each month. (After that you are charged \$0.75 for each additional hour used). In order to access this free service you'll need to configure your system to connect to our U of M modems over your phone line. I'm sure this won't seem complicated to most of you who are relatively competent with computers but to get the "simple" instructions, please refer to Dial-up Connection information at: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/acn/remote>.

## Getting to and from campus

I'm going to be blunt here; parking on campus is a pain, if not impossible most days so I'm going to promote the use of public transit to no end. I personally don't enjoy the bus, particularly not when the temperatures dip to the ungodly -30's or worse but it really is the best option. To be fair I'll give you the rundown on all your options, you know, to allow you to come to

the same conclusion I did (which is of course the purpose of this entire little guide)

## Campus Parking

As is the case at most major universities, parking on campus is limited and in high demand. With nearly 27,000 students enrolled this year and such harsh winters, the demand for parking close to campus is at an all time high. For those students lucky enough to have secured a parking pass in early June, you need not worry. For the large majority (like myself) who didn't get a parking pass, the rules are a bit different.

The few metered parking spots on campus are usually snapped up early in the day or you are forced to idle in your car while stalking every student that comes out of the buildings in hopes that they are vacating one of those spots. This is not only bad for the environment, your type A personality, but also for those other people just trying to park in their designated spots.

The University Parkade is another option and is great for winter as your car is sheltered and can be plugged in, but it is pretty expensive at \$1 for the first half hour and then another \$1 per hour for each additional hour. I would save this as your last ditch option on days when you are running really late.

The twoonie lot (formerly the loonie lot – stupid inflation) offers quite a few spaces for students willing to make the long cold trek across campus. I'll save you a painful lesson now and make it clear that it doesn't actually take twoonies (it's the university, did you really expect it to make sense?) You need either 2 loonies or 8 quarters and not some combination of the 2. Again, these spots fill up early in the day. A small shuttle bus does pick up students approximately every 15 minutes to take them to designated drop off spots on campus, so one could theoretically stay huddled in the warmth of their car until the shuttle arrives, but with gas prices at \$1.25 a litre...that could be costly!

There is also some parking available on nearby residential streets off King's Drive but most are restricted to 1 or 2 hour parking during the school year and are a 10-20 minute walk from campus. These are strongly enforced and tickets add up, so be forewarned.

So, as promised, my strong advice is to take the bus. In most areas of the city they run fairly frequently and they drop you off closer to the warmth of university buildings than most of these other options. Plus, what's a college experience without the fun of being thrown up against random strangers as you are packed like sardines into the 60 Pembina. Frankly, I think it should be a requirement.

## Links:

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/campus/parking/>

## Bus Pass

So just to bring my point home about the buses, here is some info on current prices and options.

A regular adult fare is \$1.85 (until the new year). Bus tickets and passes can be purchased conveniently on campus at Answers on the first floor of University Centre (first booth on your left when you enter the first floor of UC). A "special" rate was negotiated for university students so you'll need to show your university id in order to get the *great deal* of \$55.45 per month. Another time saving tip, don't leave it until the last couple of days of the month to purchase this pass at Answers or you'll be waiting a long time.

Although you can purchase regular adult far bus passes off campus at any of the locations listed in the link below, **the post-secondary pass can only be purchased at U of M or other colleges.**

<http://www.winnipegtransit.com/main/fares.jsp>

## Getting Paid

Now that I've outlined some of your monthly costs, the logical follow up is to talk about how you get paid. If you've applied for a grader/marker, TA or other position for this semester and haven't already spoken to Mary Kuzmeniuk (424 Duff Roblin – just down the hall from the general office on your left), you should do so ASAP. She is the lady in charge of just about everything. She's incredibly busy but also incredibly helpful so be nice to her. You'll need to fill out a form with your banking information and attach a void cheque so that your pay can be deposited directly. Definitely do this ASAP as the system has its glitches and the sooner you get the paperwork in, the better your chance of actually receiving money for your work.

## Keys

By the time you read this, you'll likely have sorted out the issue of keys to the lab but just in case, here it goes. If you are supposed to have keys to your advisors lab, or to your assigned carrel space, you'll need to clear that with your advisor first. They will inform the ladies in the general office that you are entitled to a key. Then you'll need to visit those ladies where you'll be asked to fill out a simple form before receiving your key. All graduate students are also entitled to a key to the building for all the after hours work you'll be doing (or in my case, when on Sunday you realize you

forgot all that work you were supposed to be doing in your lab). Again you'll go to the general office ladies to get that key to the building.

## Carrel Space

In theory, every graduate student would get a little office to hide out in but in reality, space in Duff Roblin is limited and is allocated based on a number of factors. First and foremost, if you are a grader/marker, TA or instructor you will get a carrel space assigned to you. Once those are assigned, I believe Mary allocates the remaining spaces based on need. These spaces will be assigned in the first week of September so if you don't hear before the end of that week, contact Mary to enquire about any space for you. The spaces aren't much more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a small room with a desk and some shelves but with the hectic pace of first year, it's really nice to have a little place to go and cry. Oh, I mean study (and cry).

## Mailboxes

All graduate students will receive their mail in the mailboxes on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor just outside the general office. It will be under the first initial of your surname.

## Grad Lab

If you are unlucky enough to not have computer access in your own research lab, there is still hope for you. There is a small computer lab located on the second floor of Duff Roblin which is exclusively for the use of graduate students. It is appropriately named the Grad Lab. The code is available from any staff member or fellow graduate student. I will not include it here because as was pointed out to me but individuals smarter than myself, this guide is open for public access and the codes are supposed to be a secret. So ask me, ask someone, and we'll pass on the code to the Grad Lab. Try to be fair with the use of these computers as there are only 4 or 5 and many more grad students.

## Photocopy Accounts

There are photocopy machines in all the libraries and in University Centre but they aren't always that convenient when you're in a rush to get something done. Therefore I would highly recommend talking to Heather in the general office about setting up a photocopy account of your own. That way you can use the machines on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Duff Roblin which saves an enormous amount of time.

## Student Groups

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/student/groups/>

Personally I think you have more than enough to deal with in first year with stats and research and more stats but if you are one of those super keeners who doesn't need to sleep or eat (the two leisure activities for graduate students), there are a number of student groups on campus ranging from chess to peer advisors to gay/lesbian groups. There is definitely a group for most interests and the link above lists all the groups and their contact information. Most are featured in University Centre in the first few weeks of September.

## Gym Pass

I feel like a bit of a hypocrite promoting the purchase of a gym pass seeing as I myself can count the # of times I've actually gone to the gym on both hands. However, my own laziness should not be an influence on you. Your first year of graduate school can be incredibly difficult and you really have to let yourself have an outlet for that stress. While some students choose sarcasm and coffee as their outlets (not naming any names), you might want to choose more wisely and consider purchasing a gym pass.

The "Gritty Grotto" as it is so fondly referred to, is still under reconstruction after 2 different flooding incidents. However, they have moved the majority of the gym equipment up to the Gold Gym in Frank Kennedy (which frankly is much nicer than the grotto). There are bikes, elliptical machines, weight machines, and lots of other stuff I have never used. A gym pass also gives you access to the pool, racquetball/squash courts, tennis courts, fitness classes, indoor tracks, and ice rinks. Try finding all of that in the city for the low, low price of \$108 for 12 months. Or if you want to try it out before really committing, you could opt for a 4 month pass at only \$63 dollars.

So go kick the \$%& out of something (preferably not someone) or go as a group and make it more fun. I mean what's more fun than sweating profusely on a recumbent bike while watching TSN's coverage of a dog show?

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/phyped/recreation/membership.shtml>

## University Health Service

Located on the first floor of University Centre (104) the University Health Service is a health unit consisting of family physicians, nurses and office staff. They offer a range of medical services from minor to acute

problems. This includes check ups, prenatal care, health and travel counseling, and health promotion programming.

They are open 8:30 – 4:30 Monday to Friday. Appointments are recommended but if you are really sick and can't wait they will usually try to squeeze you in that day. To make an appointment you can call 474-8411

It's important to bring your health insurance card with you. They accept all health plans whether from Canada or other health agencies including *C.I.D.A.* [Canadian International Development Agency], Great West Life [most common for international students], *Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship/Fellowship Plan*, *CBIE* [Canadian Bureau for International Education] and *Seaboard Life Insurance*.

## Psychological Service Centre (PSC)

The PSC was founded in 1968 as an interdisciplinary training facility for the Departments of Psychology and Social Work. It accepts referrals from the general public and most services are provide for free. It is located at 161-173 Dafoe Building and 101-115 Fletcher Argue on the University of Manitoba campus. (474-9222)

The PSC offers services including psychological assessment, therapy, and community education. The PSC also offers individual, couple, family, child, adolescent and group therapy. Consultation services are offered in the areas of clinical psychology, research and program evaluation. Community education is offered during the regular academic session through workshops and seminars. Special programs include family control of obesity.

It is important to note that all therapy sessions are video taped, but those videos are viewed only by the therapist and his/her supervisor, kept in a locked cabinet and then destroyed.

## Dental Insurance

A couple of years ago UMSU held a referendum about implementing a health and dental plans for students. 87% of students who voted were in favour and the approved plan is a group benefit plan and is mandatory for all full-time students unless there is proof of an existing health plan. The plan costs \$197 per year for a full 12 months of coverage. Details of what is covered and how to opt-out if you have a separate plan are available online at [www.umsu.ca](http://www.umsu.ca), at the UMSU Health and Dental Office in 110 University Centre or by calling 474- 6666.

## Psychology Lounge

You've probably seen this room as you walked down the hall on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Duff Roblin and wondered what it is. It says it's the psychology lounge although very little 'lounging' occurs in this room. It's mostly used by the staff for lunch and coffee breaks. It has been the subject of a rather contentious debate over the last couple of years, as students wanting to study (crazy I know) have come into conflict with staff wanting to eat their lunch without having to hear about ANOVA's or quadratic this or that.

Undoubtedly, it would be better if the students and staff had separate lounges but no such perfect world exists. So we need to make due with what we have and be considerate of one another. Studying in the psychology lounge isn't allowed. Personal feelings aside, that's the rule and we have to respect that. However, we as students are just as entitled to eat our lunch or read our non-academic literature or just to lounge in the lounge. Obviously we are all adults and we have to behave like adults by respecting the fact Mary's office is within earshot of the lounge, so keep the volume to a reasonable level. Located in the lounge is a microwave which we are all free to use.

## Security on Campus

Being on campus during the day, I have very rarely felt threatened due not only to the large number of students around but also due to the presence of campus security. However, I would not personally recommend staying on campus too late on your own. This advice isn't based on any negative personal experience but rather just wanting to err on the side of caution. Duff Roblin is a pretty large and confusing building and being in the depths of it at night alone in your lab probably isn't the wisest idea. If you have to stay late to work on research or to study, I would suggest studying at the library or in University Centre rather than on your own in Duff Roblin. Or study in groups.

If none of those options appeal to you and you choose to stay late on your own, at least take advantage of the Safewalk program that security services offers. Safewalk is a service which provides an escort on the campus for anyone who requests one. This service is provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A member of security services will meet you at your building and walk you to your car or to the bus stop if you like. You may have to wait awhile depending on the number of staff working and the demand but again, safety should always be a priority. Just call 474-9312.

If there is ever an emergency situation of any kind you can reach security service by dialing 555 from any 474- exchange.

## Food

Finally, we get to a subject on which I consider myself an expert. No, not social psychology. Food. You'll probably be spending considerable time on campus in your first year and that means at some point or another you'll get hungry. In fact, food and eating times may become the very highlight of your day. (Sad but true).

So, I'm going to outline the food services available on campus and the ones I think are worth mentioning off campus.

### **Aramark Food Services**

The first floor of University Centre is home to a number of food outlets run by Aramark. These include everything from burgers and wraps, to pasta, subs, and soups. Some of this food is really good and some of it, not so good. One general statement about most of it is that it is incredibly overpriced. This has been an issue raised by UMSU several times but thus far the University seems unwilling to change the food services provided on campus.

*There are other options to consider.*

- On the second floor of University Centre you can get Pita Pit, soups, Chinese food, and salads. Again these are fairly expensive but the lines are often shorter and the food a bit better (in my humble opinion).
- Greenhouse café located in the tunnel between Fletcher argue and University College offers a variety of soups, personal pizza's sandwiches, salads, etc for fairly reasonable prices. The lines are also considerably shorter than at UC. Plus, how often can you say you ate lunch in a tunnel? Okay, I know that's not really a plus but work with me here!
- The Science lounge located in the Armes Complex (very close to Duff Roblin) offers sandwiches and wraps and you can watch TV while you eat! It brings back fond memories of watching Dawson's Creek every Tuesday. (Come on, you know you liked that show too!).
- Tim Horton's (which I'll talk more about in my coffee section –yes there is an entire section for coffee) also offers soups and sandwiches at much more reasonable prices.
- Another option (and a well kept secret that I'm only sharing with you) is that there is a cafeteria in the Freshwater Institute. It is run by the government (not Aramark) and therefore their food is subsidized which

means cheap prices. The food is by no means healthy but the portions are huge and the prices are low and nobody knows about it so you can eat your lunch in peace. It's a bit of a hike from Duff Roblin (on University Crescent across the street from Frank Kennedy and Entomology (the two are in no way linked I promise) but it is well worth it.

## **Degree's**

I left the best for last, at least in my opinion. Degrees is the restaurant operated by UMSU and is located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of University Centre. It was formerly home to Bar Italia and then IQ's and it has had its problems over the years with slow service. From my experience those kinks have been worked out and the food is pretty good. It's also licensed, though I'm not one to advocate for drinking during the school day. It supports a lot of students so I say support the UMSU run restaurant and enjoy the views of the campus while you eat your lunch or dinner.

## **Off-Campus (and no I'm not talking about the bar)**

Winnipeg has a lot of restaurants for a fairly small city. Even if you've lived here all your life like me, you probably still haven't tried half of them. If you're new to the city, I strongly urge you to try something new every chance you get. Since grad students are on a budget I'll start with the king (or queen) of cheap foods- pizza.

You always have your standard Pizza Hut, Dominos or Boston Pizza but none of those are particularly cheap or good (in my opinion). If you're looking for something decent without breaking your bank, I suggest the following:

**Pizza Hotline:** ( 222-2222 ) It's really cheap and there are a lot of places in the city so delivery is pretty quick. Oh and the pizza doesn't suck either.

You could always try your luck with Bunty's, or Bigtime, or Flying Pizza or any of the other oddly named Pizza places. They are also cheap but I can't verify their quality. If you do dare to try these places, report back to me and I'll set up a little pizza poll on the website.

If you get your big payment for your TA job (lol) and feel like splurging, these are my recommendations for Winnipeg restaurants:

**Lux Sole:** Small place on south Osborne (726), run by 4 brothers from small town Manitoba. They use locally grown organic produce and the service is

amazing. Small menu but once you find something you like, you'll want to keep going back.

**Sukohthai**: Winnipeg has a few Thai restaurants and I have only been to one but my partner and my friends (who have tried others) agree it's the best. Located on Osborne near confusion corner, the décor is modern and clean but the thai food is authentic, or so I'm told. I just think it's delicious and inexpensive.

**Stella's Café and Bakery**: I can't say enough good things about this little place. Also on Osborne this place is a favorite and the lines are long most days. Great breakfast, sandwiches, soups and chilies. It's quaint and cozy and a definite must try.

## Coffee

If you aren't already addicted to coffee, you likely will be by the end of your first year. Not just because you'll be in need of caffeine boost but also because it becomes your exciting social function. "Let's go for coffee" is often heard on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor when one or more of us doesn't feel like doing whatever it is we are supposed to be doing.

Since you generally have to get back to doing that dreaded work the easiest place to pick up coffee is Tim Horton's. Unfortunately that means long lines unless you manage to use Tim's on Twos or whatever the heck they call the Tim Hortons on the second floor of UC.

You could pick up some Starbucks Coffee at IQ's on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor across from Degrees or get some coffee from Degrees. Both are more expensive but you avoid the long lines. Don't even get me started on Robin's Donuts because that's just wrong.

If you venture off campus for coffee I have to plug local favorite, The Fyxx with 3 locations. The Fyxx on Albert in the Exchange district is worth going to just to see the amazing architecture of the building it's in. The Fyxx on Broadways at Donald is also pretty cool. The one near St.Vital feels a little out of place but it's still a great place to meet friends for coffee. (also, opening soon is a new location on Portage Avenue right next to the MTS Centre)

Also great is Second Cup, with locations at Osborne and River, Corydon at Cockburn, and downtown. The coffee is great (mmm vanilla bean lattes) and it is Canadian which is always nice.

Closer to school there is Timothy's (on Pembina by the Hospital). I hear rumours of \$2 lattes all day long which I haven't verified.

## Words of Wisdom

Who better to give you advice than students who have been through it in the last few years?

- You are not your grades
- The whole is always greater than the sum of its parts
- Take time for yourself. No academic program is ever worth losing yourself in the seeming chaos.
- It is what it is
- What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger

### **Statistics:**

- The exams are a lot easier than you will anticipate
- Yield to the process, there is nothing you can do to change it, so just do your best and go with the flow
- You can put a lot of information on your cheat sheet if you use a size 5 font!
- Think of statistics as a rite of passage, or an initiation into graduate school. We have all done it, and we have all SURVIVED—you will too.

---

It's very true that the connection with other graduate students is a big key for your survival. It is very unlikely that your family or friends from high school exactly understand how hard times you are having through doing stats, getting unexpected results in your research, or having participants who don't follow your instructions at all and mess up your research. My family don't even know what Master's degree or Ph.D. means, and they still believe that psychology is all about counseling after 5 years of my explanation! (I'm not devaluing clinical psychology by any means.) Even if I complain to my families about hard times in my life as a graduate student, they wouldn't give me the "appropriate" response. (Yes, I have expectations on how people should respond when asking for help.) So, let me tell you, it is other graduate students who give you "the correct answers" and invaluable support. They have been going through the similar struggles as you do, and they assure you that completing a Master's degree is one of the accomplishments while you actually don't feel like it. (I'm not talking about someone specifically, am I?) I hope you enjoy our program and your life as a graduate student at U of M.

Remember to have a good time once in awhile, you can't be productive when you are burnt out.

---

Avoid comparing yourself to others. It sounds impossible but it's really not. Graduate school is filled with people who have more publications, better grades, better GRE scores, etc. Don't get caught up in the comparison game because it will derail you faster than anything else. It may seem like everyone else is doing more, is more confident, and have it all together. They don't. In fact I would bet my measly life savings that they are thinking the exact same things you are.

Turn your envy or fear of these "superior students" into a chance to learn something. We all have our strengths and weaknesses and there is nothing like grad school to bring them out. These are the people to surround yourself with because as soon as you get to know them, you'll realize they are just as insecure as you.

---

Graduate school isn't a test of how smart you are, it is a test of how much you want it. How much you want to be a clinician or a professor. A wise advisor once told me that "it's a marathon, not a race" and accordingly you need to pace yourself and set short term goals. Looking too far ahead will just blind you to what is right in front of you.

Live your life now, don't plan to live it "when you're done" because when you're done one degree, there will just be another to finish, or another publication to write up. You'll start to resent the very thing that you started out most passionate about. You DO have the time because you have to MAKE the time. A PhD at 28 isn't any different than a PhD at 33, or 35. If you want to travel, do so. If you want to do other projects outside your thesis, do so.

---