



School of Mathematics
Atlanta, GA 30332 USA

Pre-Arrival Information for Incoming PhD Students

May 2024

Dear Incoming PhD Students,

I hope that you are well, and off to a productive Summer! The purpose of this letter is to convey important information and dates about your arrival in Atlanta, our orientation program, and the start of your PhD studies in the [School of Math](#). Please let us know if we can be of any assistance and **keep us informed of any changes in your postal address, telephone number, or email**.

You may reach me at yu@math.gatech.edu. Our Director of Graduate Advising and Assessment, Dr. [Christopher Jankowski](#), may be reached at cjankowski3@gatech.edu. Our Graduate Coordinator, Ms. Tranae Coldwell, may be reached at tcaldwell34@gatech.edu. All of us will also see emails sent to dgs@math.gatech.edu. In addition to this document, you might find the following useful:

[Checklist for New Graduate Students](#)

The [Office of Graduate Studies](#) may have already pointed you to this checklist. It reiterates, and expands on, some of the general information below.

I. Practical Information

I.1. Immunization and Health Insurance

Georgia Tech requires documentation of a tuberculosis screening and various immunizations. You can see the required health forms at the [Immunization Requirements](#) site. No student is allowed to register until the immunization and the medical entrance forms are accepted by the [Student Health Service](#). In addition, all students must have medical insurance. Please look carefully at the [Student Health Insurance](#) site for details on the mandatory plan. If you already have adequate medical coverage, for example through your parents' insurance, most likely you will not want (nor need) to purchase the "mandatory plan".

I.2. The Office of International Education (OIE)

International students should refer to the [OIE website](#) and, in particular, browse the links at [International Students and Scholars](#). All international students will check in and attend OIE mandatory sessions. The following topics are covered in detail on the website or will be discussed during orientation:

- Obtaining a U.S. visa and entering the United States.
- F-1 transferring from another institution in the US to Georgia Tech.
- Medical entrance form and certificate of immunizations.
- Health and accident insurance.
- Housing and climate.

I.3. Institute-Wide Orientation Programs

Before the beginning of the Fall term there will be several [Institute-wide orientation programs](#) for new graduate students, some of which you will be required to attend. Participation in these programs will save you a great deal of time and effort in doing the many preliminary tasks that you must complete before classes begin.

I.4. School of Math Workshops and TA Training

The first day of class is **August 19**. School of Math requires **all new PhD students** to be in Atlanta no later than **August 11** and will provide an **extra stipend** to help cover your expenses for the additional week you need to be on campus. During the week of **August 12-16**, there will be Campus-wide orientation activities, as well as orientation specifically related to School of Mathematics. This includes topics such as: TA training for all new students, graduate course selection, registration, scheduling issues, and many other topics that are relevant to beginning your degree program. You can expect to be in the orientation from 9:00am- 3:00pm each day. [Dr. Burke](#), the School's Director of International Instructor Training & Language Specialist, will serve as the principal coordinator of the school's orientation program. In addition, International PhD students will need to complete an **Online Interview** with Dr. Burke (see section II.5. International Students).

Attending this orientation program will give you a head start on academic and TA issues and will give you a chance to socialize with other new and current graduate students. During the week of **August 12-16**, [Ms. Grodzinsky](#), the School's Director of TAs, will be facilitating the TA training workshops, and Dr. Burke will coordinate all other activities throughout the week related to SoM policies, procedures, campus orientation, and GT hiring. If you have questions specifically about the orientation program, please feel free to contact these two faculty members directly (klarag@math.gatech.edu and burke@math.gatech.edu)

I.5. Your Arrival Information

As soon as you know your arrival date and time, airline, and flight number please email that to dgs@math.gatech.edu. If you are flying into Atlanta, we will cover your Uber ride from airport to Georgia Tech for up to \$70.

On Monday, August 12, at 9:00am, all students will meet in Room 006 in Skiles Classroom Building for the New Graduate Student Orientation. Be sure to bring your **laptop** to the orientation daily since we will use it every day throughout the program. We recommend that you bring a sweatshirt, sweater or jacket since the room can be quite cold.

I.6. Housing and Transportation

Please make sure to check information on housing ahead of arrival. For on-campus housing, contact the [Georgia Tech Housing Office](#). For off-campus housing, you may want to look at the information at apartmentguide.com. The Housing Office also maintains a list of [off-campus housing](#). Finally, your best resource might be our current [graduate students](#). Please contact them for advice; you can find their names and email addresses on [the School of Math website](#).

Long-term parking on campus requires a permit, see the [Parking Office](#). Most graduate students live close to campus, and walk or bike to the School. Further, if you find a place to live near a MARTA station, it will not be necessary to own a car. I encourage you to try to live close to campus or MARTA, as traffic in Atlanta can be daunting. There are several [bike shops](#) around campus where you may purchase a bike. See also the [Atlanta Bicycle Coalition](#) website.

International students should check the rules about driving in the U.S. It may be legal to drive with some international drivers' licenses for a short period of time before getting your U.S. license.

II. Academic Information

II.1. Schedule of Classes

I will be here when you arrive, and will be available to discuss appropriate classes to take in the Fall Semester. At the same time, shortly before your arrival, you will be assigned a Faculty mentor. The mentor will be your future reference point for all questions of academic concern. All graduate students who are supported as either Research or Teaching Assistants, or are on a Fellowship program, or hold a Visa, must be enrolled **Full Time** all times. The Fall 2024

schedule will be posted on our [Courses and Registration Page](#). More information about registration will be discussed during the School's orientation.

II.2. Math Comprehensive Exams

If you are coming to study for the PhD in Math ([ACO](#), [BINF](#), [CSE](#), and [MLRN](#)) students should see the corresponding websites for details about their comprehensive exams), and have had prior graduate level coursework, you are encouraged to consider taking the [Written Math Comprehensive Exams](#) during the orientation week. You may attempt the Math exams as many times as you want, during the first two years of your studies. A description of the examination and the dates is available on the exam page where you can also find past exams and syllabi. You will have the opportunity to register for these exams before you arrive on campus.

II.3. Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)

All incoming PhD students must complete [Responsible Conduct of Research](#) training. This will consist of an online component and an in-person component. Graduate Admission will send you more information about this shortly. For the in-person training, the School of Math has its own in-house RCR training course, [Math 6001](#), which we strongly recommend all incoming PhD students register for in their first semester in the program. You can find a detailed syllabus for a recent offering of Math 6001 [here](#).

II.4. Teaching Assistants

If you are going to be a Teaching Assistant (TA), once you have registered, you will report your course schedule to Ms. Klara Grodzinsky. She will use this information to assign your teaching duties. We will discuss this in detail during the orientation. Ms. Grodzinsky's email is klarag@math.gatech.edu. Typical duties for new PhD students in Fall 2024 are:

- Teaching 1 Studio Section (2 hour per week in class) *
- Tutoring 1 hour/week in the Math-Lab
- Preparing for class, grading papers, communicating/meeting with students, and attending meetings with the course instructor(s)
- Enrolling in and participating in CETL 8000, the teacher training course for Math TAs.

Alternate duties may be assigned at the discretion of the TA training team and will total the same number of weekly hours. The CETL 8000 course is mandatory for all new Teaching Assistants who are teaching a Studio class and is required during the first semester you teach for the School of Math.

*Please note that during your first semester, you will receive a teaching reduction of 1 studio class (2 hours per week). Beginning in your second semester, your duties will revert to the standard teaching duties of two studio sections per semester (4 hrs per week of classroom teaching). Standard TA responsibilities typically total approximately 13 hours per week.

II.5. International Students

We will provide support to make sure that you have completed all the necessary steps prior to your arrival in Atlanta. Dr. Burke will work with you throughout the summer to ensure that you are ready for your arrival in Atlanta. You can contact Dr. Burke via email burke@math.gatech.edu.

Online Meeting:

Dr. Burke will contact you by early May to arrange an online meeting to share important information with you regarding your arrival in the School of Math. In addition, you will participate in a language assessment to determine your language skills and communication ability for instructional purposes in your role as a Teaching Assistant.

Communication Courses:

Non-native English speakers may be required to attend communication courses targeting aural/oral English necessary for effective teaching in the School of Math. These courses (2 hours/week) are taught during the Fall and Spring semesters. In some cases, students may be exempt from these courses, as determined by the communication assessment.

- Math 8305, Communication Strategies for International Teaching Assistants, Fall 2024
- Math 8306, Academic Spoken English for International Graduate Students, Spring 2025

Please contact us if we can be of further assistance. We look forward to your arrival!

Best wishes,



Xingxing Yu

Professor & Director of Graduate Studies