

# ORIENTATION GUIDE

Graduate Student Services



Spring 2026

  
**SCHAR SCHOOL OF POLICY  
AND GOVERNMENT**  
George Mason University®





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# Getting Started



*Here are some helpful tools on how to get familiar with Mason's electronic platforms.*

## CANVAS

- Canvas (lms.gmu.edu) is a web-based system that is to be used by most Schar School faculty to facilitate courses.
- Here are some helpful guides on how to use Canvas:
- Quick Start for Canvas
- Canvas FAQs



If you have issues with Canvas, please inform your faculty and reach out to the ITS Help Desk at [support@gmu.edu](mailto:support@gmu.edu).

## ACTIVATE YOUR MASON NETID & E-MAIL

- [How to Sign Up for Patriot Pass](#)
- [How to Log in to Your Mason E-Mail for the First Time](#)

## GET CONNECTED WITH PATRIOT WEB

PatriotWeb is a self-service site for students, faculty, and staff to manage administrative records and accounts. Students can use PatriotWeb to:

- Check registration status.
- Register for, change, and drop classes.
- Display class schedule.
- Check grades.

## REGISTER FOR CLASSES

You will be able to register for classes once:

- You have confirmed enrollment online through the application portal.
- You have activated your Mason NetID and password.

Once you have completed the above steps, you can log on to PatriotWeb to register for classes. Find step-by-step instructions on the [Schar Guide to PatriotWeb](#).



# Getting Started Cont.

## GETTING YOUR MASON ID

### 1. Physical ID Card

- Mason IDs can be obtained at:
  - VMH Room 220 on Mason Square (Arlington) SUB 1
  - Room 1203 on the Fairfax

### 2. Mobile ID Card (Preferred Method)

- Electronically, via the [Online Mason Card Office](#)

Students are encouraged to [upload their electronic photos for the Mason ID online](#) before retrieving their physical Mason ID from the Mason ID Office. A valid photo ID must be presented (driver's license, military ID, passport, visa) to pick up the ID.

[Learn more.](#)

Virtual students can obtain a virtual student ID. Visit the [ID Office's portal](#), click the button "Virtual ID" on the left-hand side, and follow the instructions for your submission.



## GETTING YOUR PARKING DECAL

Students with a valid Fairfax/SciTech General parking permit may obtain a complimentary supplemental parking permit for the Vernon Smith garage at Mason Square (Arlington). Proof of a valid Fairfax/SciTech permit and a class schedule is required to receive a supplemental permit. Visit the [Parking and Transportation website](#) to learn more.



## REQUIRED FORMS

There are some required steps that you will need to complete in order to start your semester as a Schar School student.

### ***Be sure to turn in your required Immunizations Records:***

- Deadline: Friday, January 15
- [Learn more at: Immunization Requirements](#)

### ***Be sure to complete your mandatory Schar School Forms:***

- Deadline: February 1 Master
- Students: [Student Guide & Academic Standards Code Receipt](#), [Emergency Contact Information](#)
- [PhD Student Handbook -- Policy on Plagiarism](#)

*Should you not submit these forms by the deadline above, a hold will be placed on your student record which will prevent you from registering for courses.*



# Schar School Student Services

## MEET YOUR ADVISORS

Schar School Student Services counsels students on academic issues through the exploration of students' academic, career, and personal goals. The advising staff is available to assist students with course selection and the registration process as well as the interpretation of academic regulations and policies.



**Silva Pecini Morris** Assistant Dean of Graduate Student Services  
Academic Advising for: *Public Policy and Public Administration and related certificates*  
[specini@gmu.edu](mailto:specini@gmu.edu)



**Justine Drayton** Director of Master's Student Services  
Academic Advising for: *Biodefense, Global Commerce and Policy, International Security, Organization Development and Knowledge Management, Political Science and related certificates*  
[jdrayto@gmu.edu](mailto:jdrayto@gmu.edu)



**John Washington** Director of PhD Student Services  
Advising for: *Doctoral Students in Biodefense, Political Science, and Public Policy*  
[jwashi4@gmu.edu](mailto:jwashi4@gmu.edu)

## How to Prepare for Advising:

- Get to know your program's curriculum requirements by reviewing your program's degree worksheet. Degree worksheets are used by graduate students to chart out their time in their graduate program and prepare for graduation. These worksheets are to be completed with the help of an advisor during your first semester.
- You can view updated course schedules on [PatriotWeb](#).
- We encourage you to become familiar with the Schar School's Student Guide/Handbook

### Master Students:

- [Degree Worksheets](#)
- [Master's Programs Student Guide](#)

### PhD Students:

- [Degree Worksheets](#)
- [PhD Student/Faculty Handbook](#)

# Schar School Career Development

The Schar School of Policy and Government offers comprehensive career and professional development services to prepare students for success. Offering individualized assistance to students and alumni, the Schar School's career advisors will help you explore career and internship opportunities, define your goals, and develop the skills needed for a successful job search, including crafting a resume and cover letter that stand out.

Annual events include Resume Clinics, Skill-Building Workshops, and the Career Fair.



**Duane Bradshaw**

Director of Career Development

[dbradsha@gmu.edu](mailto:dbradsha@gmu.edu)



**Brian Bar**

Associate Director of Career Development and Alumni Relations

[bbar@gmu.edu](mailto:bbar@gmu.edu)

Schedule a meeting with Duane Bradshaw or Brian Bar

Join our [\*\*Career and Professional Networking Group\*\*](#)

Register for our [\*\*Graduate Student Services Seminars\*\*](#)

Find open positions and events at [\*\*Handshake Career Portal\*\*](#)

Explore our [\*\*Online Career Webinars\*\*](#)

Attend our [\*\*Annual Career & Internship Fair\*\*](#)

# Academic & Research Services

## University Libraries

[library.gmu.edu](http://library.gmu.edu) | 703-993-8188

Explore Library Resources at the Mason Square & Fairfaxes, and online! You can use these online guides, which were curated for the Schar School:

- [Biodefense Guide](#)
- [GCP Guide](#)
- [International Security Guide](#)
- [ODKM Guide](#)
- [Policy and Government Guide](#)
- [Public Administration Guide](#)

Reach out to the Mason Square Library Information Desk [atacl@gmu.edu](mailto:atacl@gmu.edu) should you have questions about using library resources and conducting research.

[Click here to view a video tutorial of Schar School Library Resources.](#)

## The Writing Center

[writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu) | 703-993-1200

**Mason's Writing Center** offers free writing support to Mason students. Accomplished graduate students provide tutoring and deliver workshops. The Writing Center help writers through all stages of the writing process from brainstorming and organizing to revising and polishing. Sessions are currently offered both in-person and online.

- [Writing Center Resources](#)



# Health & Wellness

## Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

[caps.gmu.edu](https://caps.gmu.edu) | 703-993-2380

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides a wide range of free services to students. CAPS' individual and group therapy, workshops, online self-help, and community education programs are designed to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance.

- [CAPS Services](#)
- [Distance Learners Resources](#)

## Student Health Services (SHS)

[shs.gmu.edu](https://shs.gmu.edu) | [shsinfo@gmu.edu](mailto:shsinfo@gmu.edu) | 703-993-2831

Mason's SHS provides care for a range of needs, including diagnosing and treating injuries and illness, providing immunizations, managing chronic health concerns, and conducting physical exams. There is no charge to see a health care provider, but there are fees for lab tests, medications, immunizations, and supplies.

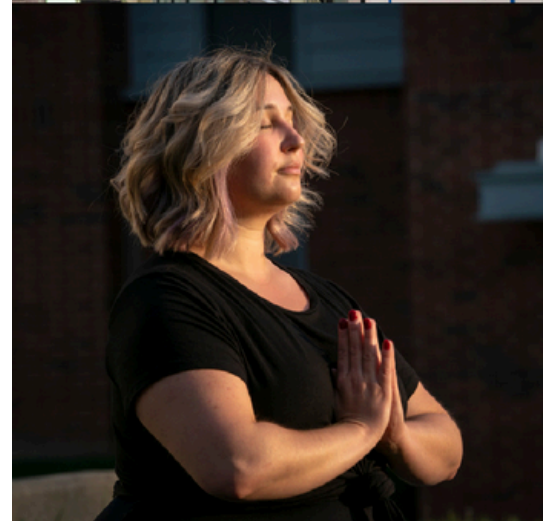
- [Immunizations](#) - Deadline: August 1, 2025
- [Health Insurance](#) - Open Enrollment ends September 15, 2025

## Mason Recreation

[recreation.gmu.edu](https://recreation.gmu.edu) | [masonrec@gmu.edu](mailto:masonrec@gmu.edu) | 703-993-5323

Mason Recreation has a multitude of services that are available to students: from outdoor adventures, group fitness, to personal training.

- [Events Group](#)
- [Fitness Outdoor](#)
- [Adventures](#)



# Health & Wellness Cont.

## Center for the Advancement of Well-Being

[wellbeing.gmu.edu](http://wellbeing.gmu.edu) | [cwb@gmu.edu](mailto:cwb@gmu.edu) | 703-993-6090

The Center for the Advancement of Well-Being (CWB) engages in research that deepens the understanding of the science of well-being and evidence-based practices. CWB offerings include programs and resources for students, faculty, and staff along with executive education programs for organizations, agencies, and individuals.



# Funding

## Graduate Fellowships

[gradfellows.gmu.edu](https://gradfellows.gmu.edu) | [pgfs@gmu.edu](mailto:pgfs@gmu.edu) | 703-993-3131

The [Office of Fellowships](#) at Mason offers information on external fellowships and funding opportunities for graduate students (e.g., national and regional competitive awards that come from outside the university, for example, from government agencies, private organizations, or philanthropic trusts).

## Military and Veteran Benefits

[military.gmu.edu](https://military.gmu.edu) | [military@gmu.edu](mailto:military@gmu.edu) | 703-993-1316

With a dedicated [Office of Military Services](#), military and veteran students and dependents will be connected to a variety of services, including counseling and advising on benefits, academic, and admissions requirements, and career transition. George Mason University offers several [services and benefits to eligible veterans and military students](#), including the Yellow Ribbon Program and Post-9/11 GI Bill.

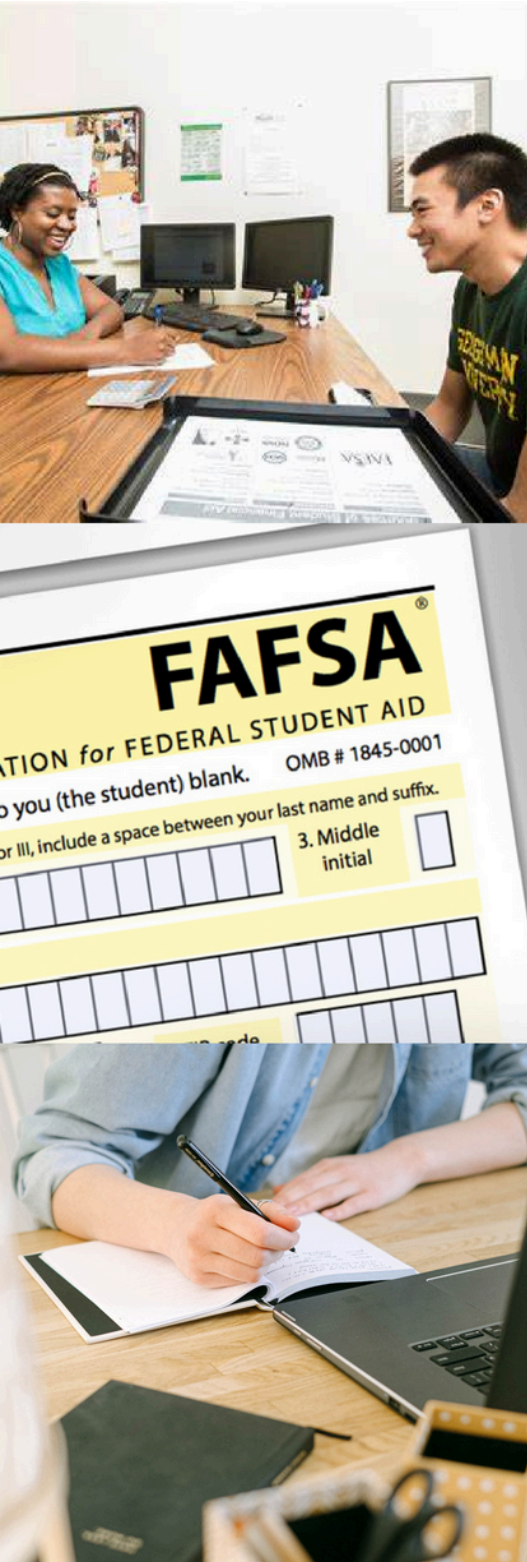
## International Students

[oips.gmu.edu](https://oips.gmu.edu) | [oips@gmu.edu](mailto:oips@gmu.edu) | 703-993-2970

International students should visit the *International* section on the [Office of Financial Aid](#) website to learn about funding opportunities that may be available to them. Though federal and state financial aid is not available for international students, other resources may be helpful.



# Funding



## Office of Financial Aid

[financialaid.gmu.edu](http://financialaid.gmu.edu) | (703) 993-2000

The [Office of Financial Aid](#) has a team of professionals available to assist students with the financial aid process. Many Mason students receive some kind of financial aid, such as grants, scholarships, work-study employment, or loans. For priority consideration, complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and submit it on time. For more information, visit [How to Apply for Financial Aid](#).

## General Scholarship Application

Mason's [General Scholarship Application](#) is open to all Mason students, [including graduate students](#), to review and apply for scholarship opportunities offered through the Office of Student Financial Aid and various other departments.

## Current Student Scholarships

The Schar School offers information on [internal and external resources](#) for research and scholarship funding. Mason also [provides information about resources](#) to assist students in their search for scholarship funding. Learn more about [graduate funding resources](#).

# Student Resources

## Student Support and Advocacy Center

[ssac.gmu.edu](https://ssac.gmu.edu) | [ssac@gmu.edu](mailto:ssac@gmu.edu) | 703-993-3686

The Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) helps students develop and maintain healthy lifestyles by addressing some of the most challenging issues they may face during their collegiate years, including: Stress management, healthy relationships, financial well-being, sexual assault, drug and alcohol use, nutrition and body image, and sexual health.

## University Life

[ulife.gmu.edu](https://ulife.gmu.edu) | [ulcentrl@gmu.edu](mailto:ulcentrl@gmu.edu) | 703-993-8760

University Life at George Mason University proactively promotes and supports the academic, personal and professional development and empowerment of graduate and professional students. It does so by creating relevant programs and services that support student engagement and success.

[Campus Resources - Quick Guide](#)

[Virtual Connect](#)

[Mason Square \(Arlington\) Housing Guide](#)



# Student Resources Cont.

## Transportation

[transportation.gmu.edu](http://transportation.gmu.edu) | [transpo@gmu.edu](mailto:transpo@gmu.edu) | 703-993-2828

The Fairfax/Mason Square (Arlington) shuttle operates between Sandy Creek Transit Center (Fairfax) and VMH (Mason Square - Arlington) with stops at Rappahannock River Lane on the Fairfax and at Fairfax Circle (intersection of Lee Highway and Circle Woods Drive). All shuttles are free for Mason students and employees with valid Mason IDs presented when boarding.

### Fairfax Parking Office

Sandy Creek Shuttle Building (703)

993-2710 Monday – Friday, 8:30 am – 5:00 pm

Visitors Section: Open 7 days/week -

24 hours a day in the Mason Pond Parking Deck, Rappahannock River Parking Deck, and Shenandoah Parking Deck.

### Mason Square (Arlington) Parking Office VMH,

Room 219

(703) 993-8007 or (703) 993-8146

Monday - Thursday, 9:00 am - 6:00 pm

Friday, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm



Visitor parking is available in the VMH Parking Garage.

Benefits available to students:

- Enrolled students get discounted \$25 [Capital Bikeshare](#) annual memberships
- Bike Arlington - [Comfort Map](#) offers alternative and safe bike routes  
Students can take an advantage of public transportation such as [ART — Arlington transit](#), [CUE — City-University Energysaver](#), and [Fairfax Connector](#)

# Student Resources Cont.

## Center for Leadership and Intercultural Engagement

[clie.gmu.edu](http://clie.gmu.edu) | [clie@gmu.edu](mailto:clie@gmu.edu) | 703-993-4186

The Center for Leadership and Intercultural Engagement empowers individuals to grow as inclusive leaders, build meaningful connections, and drive positive change. Through a wide range of resources, from leadership theories and identity development frameworks to interactive activities and global coalition-building tools, the Center supports personal and collective growth. Whether you're exploring your leadership style or deepening your understanding of diversity and inclusion, the Center provides guidance to help you lead with purpose and impact.



## LGBTQ+ Resources Center

[lgbtq.gmu.edu](http://lgbtq.gmu.edu) | [lgbtq@gmu.edu](mailto:lgbtq@gmu.edu) | 703-993-2702

The LGBTQ+ Resources Center supports LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff by providing advising, advocacy, referral, education and training, group and workshop facilitation, and leadership development.



# Student Resources

## Disability Services

[ds.gmu.edu](https://ds.gmu.edu) | [ods@gmu.edu](mailto:ods@gmu.edu) | 703-993-2474

Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities.

## Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS)

[oips.gmu.edu](https://oips.gmu.edu) | [oips@gmu.edu](mailto:oips@gmu.edu) | 703-993-2970

The Office of International Programs and Services educates, celebrates and serves the Mason community, including international and domestic students, faculty and exchange visitors, by helping them reach their highest academic and personal goals.

## Access, Compliance, and Community

[oacc.gmu.edu](https://oacc.gmu.edu) | [oacc@gmu.edu](mailto:oacc@gmu.edu) | 703-993-8730

The Office of Access, Compliance, and Community monitors and supports George Mason's commitments to all-inclusive diversity and equal access to opportunity, as well as affirms a culture of integrity that values shared responsibility as a critical element of an inclusive and diverse academic community.



## Spring 2026 - Save the Dates!

### SCHAR STATION

Connect with faculty and staff  
Every Wednesday, 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm  
1<sup>st</sup> floor, VMH

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

- February 12 (Thursday)  
2pm - 4:00pm | VMH 602
- February 19 (Thursday)  
2pm - 4:00pm | VMH 602
- February 26 (Thursday)  
2pm - 4:00pm | VMH 602
- March 5 (Thursday)  
2pm - 4:00pm | VMH 602

### VIRTUAL ADVISING OPEN HOUSE WEEK MASTER'S STUDENTS

- March 16 (Monday)  
4pm - 6:30pm | Virtual
- March 19 (Thursday)  
12pm - 2pm | Virtual
- April 13 (Monday)  
4pm - 6:30pm | Virtual
- April 20 (Monday)  
12pm - 2pm | Virtual

### POGO 511

#### WORKSHOPS & EXAMS

For more information, visit:  
<https://schar.gmu.edu/511>

### RESUME CLINIC

- Tuesday, February 10, 4:30–6:00pm | Virtual
- Wednesday, February 25, 4:30–6:00pm | Virtual

### MASON CAREER FAIR

- Tuesday–Thursday, February 17–19, 11:00am–4:00pm | Fairfax (TBA)

### FEDERAL JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

- Wednesday, February 18, 12:00–1:00pm | Virtual

### STRENGTHEN YOUR CV FOR PHD STUDENTS

- Friday, February 20, 3:00–4:15pm | Hybrid (VMH 602)

### MASON SQUARE GRADUATE CAREER AND INTERNSHIP FAIR

- Tuesday, March 2, 3:00–6:00pm | VMH Multipurpose Room

### U.S. JOB SEARCH FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Tuesday, March 17, 1:30–3:00pm | Virtual

### TIPS FOR OBTAINING A SECURITY CLEARANCE WEBINAR

- Wednesday, March 25, 12:00–1:00pm | Virtual

### STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAREERS

- Tuesday, March 31, 6:00–7:30pm | Virtual

### INTERVIEWING SKILLS CLINIC

- Wednesday, April 8, 6:00–7:00pm | In-person (VMH 560)

### SALARY NEGOTIATIONS WORKSHOP

- Tuesday, April 14, 6:00–7:00pm | Virtual

### PHD AWARDS, ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY, AND PI ALPHA ALPHA INDUCTION

- Friday, April 24 (tentative), 5:30–7:00pm | FUSE (6<sup>th</sup> floor)

### UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT

- Thursday, May 14, 10:00am | Fairfax (TBA)

### SCHAR SCHOOL DEGREE CELEBRATION

- Saturday, May 16, 6:30pm | Fairfax (TBA)

# Academic Calendar

## Spring 2026

EVENT	DATE
First Day of Fall Classes	Tue. Jan 20
Last Day to Add: All Individual Sections Forms Due	Tue. Jan 27
Last Day to Drop: With 100% Tuition Refund	Tue. Feb 3
Last Day to Drop: With 50% Tuition Refund	Tue. Feb 10
Spring Recess (No Classes)	Mon. Mar 9 - Sun. Mar 15
Dissertation/Thesis Deadline	Fri. May 1
Last Day of Class	Mon. May 4
<b>Reading Day(s):</b> Reading days provide students with additional study time for final examinations. Faculty may schedule optional study sessions, but regular classes or exams may not be held.	Tue. May 5 and Sun. May 10
Examination Period	Wed. May 6 - Wed. May 13

**PLEASE COMPLETE BOTH SURVEYS**



SCHAR SCHOOL NEW MASTER'S  
STUDENT ORIENTATION SURVEY



MANDATORY ORIENTATION  
FORM FOR MASTER'S STUDENTS



**SCHAR SCHOOL OF POLICY  
AND GOVERNMENT**  
George Mason University®

[schar.gmu.edu](http://schar.gmu.edu)

[schargss@gmu.edu](mailto:schargss@gmu.edu)