

Tips for New SCS Graduate Students

A. Planning and Organization

- Attend an online orientation to prepare for your program.
- Take a campus tour to familiarize yourself with where the classrooms, library, bookstore, and administration offices are. If you are an online student, take time to become familiar with the university's many online resources, including library databases.
- Learn how to navigate CAESAR. You will use it to update personal information, add or drop classes, pay tuition, and much more.
- Check the technology requirements for classes and make sure you have access to the necessary software.
- Register for classes early; a class may be canceled if there is insufficient enrollment.
- Not all courses are offered year-round; some may only be offered in a specific quarter. Make sure you know what courses are being offered in upcoming quarters and plan ahead; including enrolling in pre-requisites when needed. Taking time to do so will help you stay on track. The best place to find the most current course schedule is on the SCS website:
<http://scs.northwestern.edu/grad/courses>.
- The university does not accept credit card payment for graduate tuition; instead, students may set up electronic check transfers through CAESAR.
- Get up-to-date information about the academic calendar, especially the add/drop deadlines for courses. You may find the graduate academic calendar here:
<http://scs.northwestern.edu/grad/calendar/>.
- Mark important dates on your diary at the beginning of the quarter (such as paper due dates, midterms, and finals) to keep track of your work load. Adjust your personal schedule, if necessary, to meet the course requirements in a timely manner.
- Begin thinking about your master's thesis or capstone project early in your program, so that you can select courses that will enable you to focus and deepen your research project.

B. Communication

- Activate your Net ID as soon as possible so you can start accessing various password-protected sites.
- Log on to Blackboard 1-2 weeks before your class begins and click on "Course Documents" to find the syllabus, reading list, and any early assignments, to ensure you are ready for the first class meeting. Check Blackboard often.
- Check your Northwestern email account regularly. Alternatively, forward messages sent to your Northwestern account to an account that you use regularly.
- Subscribe to your program listserv to obtain up-to-date information about your program and to receive current job postings and internship opportunities.

C. Resources

- Read the Student Handbook, which contains important information about SCS and your program. You may find your student handbook here: <http://scs.northwestern.edu/grad/information/handbook.cfm>.
- Get in touch with your academic coordinator as early as possible in your program.
- Check the “Information for New Students” page on the SCS web site.
- Read student comments on Northwestern’s Course and Teacher Evaluation Council (CTEC) website to understand more about the classes that you are interested in taking. You may find evaluations here: <http://www.registrar.northwestern.edu/ctec/>.
- Use the Writing Place, a free tutoring service that provides assistance to students who need help writing papers. Likewise, use the Math Place, a free tutoring service that provides assistance to students who need help in math topics such as statistics.
- If you ever feel overwhelmed, seek help from your faculty, academic coordinators, and the Student Advisory Board (SAB).

D. Study Skills and Habits

- Buy your textbook early so you can review the first few chapters before the first class meeting.
- Do not miss class! Attendance is mandatory.
- Block off times to study regularly. Ten-week quarters go by very quickly, and you will be more successful if you pace yourself.
- Grab 15. If you have 15 minutes while you are waiting in line, use it. Carry a course book or an article to read. Do not underestimate small chunks of time; you will be pleasantly surprised at how much you can accomplish.
- Complete all assigned readings diligently prior to class. Schedule sufficient time to read, and don’t stop with the assigned readings. Find additional sources of information on topics that are of particular interest to you.
- Do not expect professors to review the assigned readings. It is your responsibility to bring questions to class.
- Do not fall behind. Most courses are cumulative in nature. Attend office hours or contact the instructor if you do not fully understand a topic covered in class.
- Find at least one person you enjoy working with on projects and presentations and study together, if possible.
- Who says learning only takes place the classroom? Get involved in professional associations and talk with colleagues who can help you advance your learning.

~ Good luck! ~