



Master of Arts Program in South Asia Studies

Student Handbook

2025-2026

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Columbia University

This booklet supplements the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Student Bulletin, Essential Policies for the Columbia Community, the South Asia Institute's website at (<http://www.sai.columbia.edu>), and other information on GSAS and Columbia University websites. Please use those sources to inform yourself of GSAS policies and procedures other than those contained in this booklet. While every effort has been made to ensure that this booklet is accurate and up to date, it may include inaccuracies or outdated information due to changes that have been implemented after publication. To verify any of the information contained in this booklet, please contact the South Asia Institute office.

All MA students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with and complying with the regulations of the University, of the Graduate School, and of the South Asia Studies MA program. Please be aware that lack of knowledge about GSAS and/or departmental rules and policies cannot excuse students for failure to comply with these regulations.

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The material in this handbook, which does not include all regulations and procedures pertinent to MA students, should be read in conjunction with:

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Student Guide and Policy Handbook:
<https://gsas.columbia.edu/student-guide/policy-handbook>

University Policies for the Columbia Community: <https://universitypolicies.columbia.edu/students>

Columbia Home page, Resources for Students: <https://universitylife.columbia.edu/>

I. ID Card, access to the computer network, and ID security

Set up your University Network ID (UNI) and password right away; you use them on SSOL to register for classes and to pay your tuition bills online. To activate your UNI and Columbia e-mail account, go to <http://uni.columbia.edu>.

Remember that Columbia sends its bills **electronically to your Columbia email address**.

After you have registered for at least one course, the Columbia Card office in 204 Kent can issue you your ID card.

DO NOT GIVE your UNI password, your registration PIN, or your 9-digit Columbia ID number (C00XXXXXX) to anyone. There is a real risk that someone can use one of these numbers to gain access to your confidential information and to make changes to your university record.

II. Academic Program

A. Degree Requirements

The Master of Arts in South Asia Studies program requires 30 graduate points. Courses numbered 4000 or higher are graduate courses and have a prefix of GU or GR. The MA curriculum includes a required introductory course and a capstone requirement of a final thesis. Students may enroll in undergraduate courses, such as language courses, but undergraduate courses cannot be counted for credit toward the MA degree. (They will be counted toward the GPA.) See the MA checklist on the MA “Program Documents” page at <https://sai.columbia.edu/content/ma-program-documents>.

Students entering the MA program are charged tuition based on the residence unit system. **Two residence units are required in order to qualify to graduate.** In a given semester, a student may register for a full unit (up to 18 points), a half unit (up to three courses), or a quarter unit (one or two courses). After completing two residence units, a student must register for extended residence to register for additional courses. For more information, see the following GSAS webpages: <http://gsas.columbia.edu/content/residence-unit-and-other-registration-categories> and <https://gsas.columbia.edu/student-guide/financing-your-education>.

Note: International students must register for at least 12 points to qualify as full-time students.

Course requirements:

1. SASS GR5000: *Introduction to the Study of South Asia* (4 points)
2. Four courses (12-16 points) in a single discipline or an area of specialization (may include one independent study and advanced language courses)
3. Elective courses (6-12 points) in South Asian Studies
4. Final Master's Thesis completed in the final term and registered under *SASS GR5900 Research Seminar* or *SASS GR5999 Supervised Individual Research*

See below for example of programs with and without language study.

Sample program without language study (2 semesters):

Fall semester:

SASS GR5000: Intro. to the Study of South Asia	1 course	(4 credits)
Courses in discipline of specialization	2 course	(6-8 credits)
Elective	1 course	(3-4 credits)

Spring semester:

Courses in discipline of specialization	2 course	(6-8 credits)
Elective:	1 course	(3-4credits)
Capstone paper/thesis seminar SASS G5990:	1 course	(3-4 credits)

Sample program with advanced language study (2 semesters):

Fall semester:

SASS GR5000: Intro. to the Study of South Asia	1 course	(4 credits)
Advanced language (at 4000+ level)	1 course	(3-4 credits)
1 Course in specialization related to language	1 course	(3-4 credits)
1 elective in another discipline	1 course	(3-4 credits)

Spring semester:

Advanced language at 4000+level	1 course	(3-4 credits)
1 course in specialization related to language	1 course	(3-4 credits)
1 elective in another discipline	1 course	(3-4 credits)
Capstone paper/thesis seminar SASS G5990:	1 course	(3-4 credits)

Sample program with beginning language study (4 semesters):

Year 1 fall semester:

SASS GR5000: Intro. to the Study of South Asia	1 course	(4 credits)
Elementary language I	1 course	(5 credits)
1 course in specialization	1 course	(3-4 credits)
1 additional elective optional	1 course	(3-4 credits)

Year 1 spring semester:

Elementary language II	1 course	(5 credits)
1-2 courses in specialization	1-2 courses	(3-8 credits)
1-2 additional electives	1-2 courses	(3-8 credits)

Year 2 fall semester:

Intermediate language I	1 course	(5 credits)
1-2 courses in specialization	1-2 courses	(3-8 credits)
1-2 additional electives	1-2 courses	(3-8 credits)

Year 2 spring semester:

Intermediate language II	1 course	(5 credits)
0-2 courses in specialization	0-2 courses	(0-8 credits)
1-2 Electives	1 course	(3-8 credits)
Capstone paper/thesis seminar SASS G5990	1 course	(2-4 credits)

Sample program with intermediate language study (3 semesters):

Year 1 fall semester:

SASS GR5000: Intro. to the Study of South Asia	1 course	(4 credits)
Intermediate language I	1 course	(5 credits)
1 course in specialization	1 course	(3-4 credits)
(1 additional elective optional)	1 course	(3-4 credits)

Year 1 spring semester:

Intermediate language II	1 course	(5 credits)
1-2 courses in specialization	1-2 courses	(3-8 credits)
1-2 additional electives	1-2 courses	(3-8 credits)

Year 2 fall semester:

Advanced language I	1 course	(3-4 credits)
1-2 courses in specialization	1-2 courses	(3-8 credits)
SASS G5999 Supervised Individual Research	1 course	(2-4 credits)

B. Courses

SAI compiles a lists of South Asia courses for the MA program each term from graduate-level courses selected from GSAS departments in the humanities and social sciences (GU or GR courses), the School of International and Public Affairs, and other schools. The lists are on the SAI website on the home page and “Degree Programs” menu item. Students are not limited to the courses from these lists – additional courses may be found on the Directory of Classes.

Courses whose numbers begin with UN or BC do not count toward the MA degree. Some “UN” undergraduate courses, such as “History of South Asia I,” may have GU or GR course numbers and sections for graduate students to receive graduate credit. Normally only one Directed Reading (independent study) course may be applied toward the MA degree.

Select courses with an eye toward your requirements as well as your interests and discuss your choices with the MA Director. The online Directory of Classes indicates whether any permissions or prerequisites are required for a course. Instructor permission may be required when class size is limited or if the course requires a specialized background or advanced preparation.

The South Asia MA program degree requirements are on the “MA Checklist” document. You can find the Checklist at <https://sai.columbia.edu/content/ma-program-documents>. You should bring an up-to-date checklist with you when consulting with the MA Director in order to help keep track of your degree progress.

C. Transfer Credit

MA students may not transfer any credit from another university. GSAS will transfer a maximum of 15 points in graduate post-baccalaureate courses taken at Columbia as a non-matriculated student, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MA, if the courses are applicable to the South Asia program and if the courses have not been used to satisfy any other degree requirements. The MA Director must approve all transfer credits. Transfer credit may partially

fulfill the Residence Unit requirement. Once students have enrolled, they must complete all courses for the MA at Columbia. Students are encouraged to request possible transfer credit early in their studies so they may plan their program requirements and courses accordingly.

D. Special Courses for MA Students

SASS GR5000: Introduction to the Study of South Asia (four points)

A Fall term required core course for all students studying for the MA in South Asia Studies. The course examines how social science research approaches have shaped our understanding of South Asia and have raised incisive questions about the distinctive ways that rapid social and cultural change play out in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. It will examine how history, anthropology, and ethnographic research have shaped our understanding of South Asia, and how South Asia is defining itself as a region and within the world.

It focuses on historical and contemporary issues and theoretical approaches, contextualizing these approaches by considering how these have evolved from earlier questions posed in the social sciences. It begins by examining British colonial perspectives on Indian society and cultures and asks how early outsiders' perceptions and concerns played a role in shaping India as an object of study, and how British historical approaches played out in defining India. It explores a range of contemporary studies on South Asia, including topics such as religion, caste, the state, location and lived sites, communalism and violence, gender and the body, and globalization.

SASS GU4998: Directed Readings (one to four points).

The course is for independent study and individual research under the supervision of a Columbia faculty member, with the written permission of the professor and approval of the MA Director.

Courses for writing the MA thesis:

SASS GR5900: South Asia Research Seminar (one to four points).

The course is limited to SAI MA students writing their thesis. The seminar provides a structured opportunity to do research and write in stages, to review and discuss one's work, and to receive constructive advice on writing, in a seminar format. Students must submit a proposal for their final thesis to the MA Director, with approval from the thesis supervisor, prior to registering for the course. ***The course is offered in the spring term and is required if offered in the student's final semester.***

SASS GR5999 Supervised Individual Thesis Research (one to four points) is the method of writing the thesis as an independent study under the supervision of a faculty member (thesis supervisor). The student must have one supervisor. A second supervisor (or reader) is optional if the guidance and advice of a second supervisor is wanted or the thesis spans different academic disciplines. Supervised Individual Research is available in the fall, spring, and summer terms. This course may be taken **only** in the student's final semester of study and is to be used only for writing the MA thesis.

E. Thesis

The final thesis is a work of substance and length (approximately 50 pages not counting bibliography and notes) requiring research that draws together ideas developed during a candidate's interdisciplinary studies. Students should begin thinking about their topic early in the

program. Further course work and research will develop, improve, and probably alter the original concept by the time one begins to write. The thesis is written as part of the thesis-writing seminar when offered.

Students must submit a written thesis proposal to a professor who must approve the topic and agree to serve as a supervisor before the project can begin. The proposal—about 1,000 words long—should contain a statement of the problem, the nature of the resources to be used, plans for analysis, a bibliography, and a timetable for the project's completion. Proposals may be altered as required during the process of writing.

Thesis guidelines, including proposal and final thesis deadlines and requirements, are available on the SAI website, at <https://sai.columbia.edu/content/ma-program-documents>. Theses of SAI alumni are available in the SAI office. Students are encouraged to look through them for insight and inspiration on the thesis-writing process.

Once the faculty supervisor(s) have evaluated and approved the thesis, a final copy is deposited with the SAI program. ***The degree will be granted after the thesis has been approved by the MA Director, and the final approved thesis has been deposited at SAI, in both a paper and an electronic version.***

F. Academic Progress and Special Marks

Academic progress depends upon the successful completion of courses required for the degree. South Asia MA candidates must maintain an average of B (3.00) or better and make continual progress toward the completion of the degree to remain in good standing. Academic records are reviewed each term to determine whether candidates are making satisfactory progress.

Those who do not maintain a satisfactory average or continued academic progress may be placed on probation or dismissed from the program.

Students who receive a grade of IN (Incomplete) or CP have one semester to complete work for the course and receive a letter grade. After one semester, the IN becomes an F.

G. Academic Integrity and Responsible Research

Students should be aware that academic dishonesty (for example, plagiarism, cheating on an examination, or dishonesty in dealing with a faculty member or other University official) or the threat of violence or harassment are serious offenses and will be dealt with severely. See <https://gsas.columbia.edu/student-guide/research/academic-integrity-and-responsible-conduct-research> and <https://research.columbia.edu/research-misconduct>.

Graduate students are expected to exhibit the high level of personal and academic integrity and honesty required of all members of an academic community as they engage in scholarly discourse and research.

Scholars draw inspiration from the work done by other scholars; they argue their claims with reference to others' work; they extract evidence from the world or from earlier scholarly works. When a student engages in these activities, it is vital to credit properly the source of his or her

claims or evidence. To fail to do so violates one's scholarly responsibility. In practical terms, students must not cheat on examinations, and deliberate plagiarism is prohibited. Plagiarism includes buying, stealing, borrowing, or otherwise obtaining all or part of a paper (including obtaining or posting papers online); hiring someone to write a paper or complete research; copying from or paraphrasing another source without proper citation or falsification of citations; misrepresenting AI-generated materials as one's own original work; and building on the ideas of another without citation. Students should not submit the same paper to more than one class.

Students are responsible for proper citation and paraphrasing, and they must take special care to avoid even accidental plagiarism. The best strategy is to use great caution in the handling of ideas and prose passages: take notes carefully and clearly mark words and ideas not your own. Failure to observe these rules of conduct will result in serious academic consequences, which can include dismissal from the university.

Students engaging in research must be aware of and follow university policies regarding intellectual and financial conflicts of interest, integrity and security in data collection and management, intellectual property rights and data ownership, and necessary institutional approval for research with human subjects and animals.

H. Research with Human Subjects

All proposals for research by graduate students that involve human subjects, including surveys and interviews, must be reviewed by Columbia's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB encourages consultation at all stages of the research process. For an appointment, please call 212-851-7040. For more information, visit the IRB website at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/irb/>.

I. File an Application for Graduation

In order to complete the graduation process and receive your diploma, you must file an application to graduate with the University Registrar. Be sure your mailing address is correct on SSOL by the Monday before the diploma conferral date – see the DP address option on SSOL. You should submit the [Application for Degree or Certificate](#) by the appropriate deadline, at <https://registrar.columbia.edu/content/graduation-and-diplomas>.

The application deadline dates are:

- September 1, to finish during the Summer term, with degrees conferred in October
- November 1, to finish during the Fall term, with degrees conferred in February
- December 1, to finish during the Spring term, with the degrees conferred in May
- March 1, to finish during the Summer term, with degrees conferred in June

III. Registration

Students register for all classes online, using SSOL, during their individually assigned appointment times, which can be found on SSOL. You will need your UNI and UNI password. See below for directions on how to choose courses. Fall registration for incoming students opens in late August. To determine the specific dates and times when you can register, log in to SSOL and click on

“Registration Appointments” in the menu. Registration appointments are published in SSOL in mid-August. Spring registration dates are in November, and there is an April registration period for second year students planning to attend in the Fall. Please remember, to avoid late fees, register for at least one class before the start of a given term. Late registration (drop/add period) begins on the first day of class and ends on the Friday of the following week. After the add/drop period, you will be charged full tuition for any course dropped.

A. Getting ready to register

Complete registration information can be found at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/registrar/>. Students can register online at [Student Services Online \(SSOL\)](#). The Registrar has a walk-in front desk at 205 Kent Hall.

- Find a course on the web: A list of pre-approved courses for the SAI MA program is posted on the MA program pages on the SAI website. A wider list of all undergraduate and graduate classes can be found on the SAI website under the main menu item, “Courses” and on the home page. These are only some of the courses available to you. Use the *Directory of Classes* (at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/bulletin/uwb/>) to supplement this course list, to look for more options, and to check for last-minute changes, such as class time, days, and location.
- Note the call number (5 digits long) for each course for which you wish to register.
- Contact the MA Director to discuss your courses. Without prior approval from the Program Director, you may not get credit toward the degree for a course.
- Find your appointment time to register online (not everyone registers at the same time) on Student Services Online (SSOL).
- Add/drop of courses can be accomplished on SSOL. Courses that require instructor permission will have instructions on the Directory of Classes menu, and will direct you to the department website or to the instructor’s email. You will be placed on a wait-list until your application is approved.

Note: Students may not count any 3000-level courses toward the MA degree.

B. To register for a course online

You need your UNI, UNI password, PIN, and 9-digit Columbia ID number to register. You can find your PIN and ID number at Student Services Online (<https://ssol.columbia.edu>).

During your appointment time, go online to Student Services Online (SSOL). If you go online before your appointment time, the system will remind you of your next appointment.

All MA students must register for a Residence Unit in every semester they enroll in classes.

Students may register for one, one-half, or one-quarter, or extended units per term.

To graduate, students must have a total of two Residence Units.

After students have reached two units, they must register for an Extended Residence unit.

C. To register for a course that requires instructor/department permission

Some courses require instructor or departmental approval, and may be blocked for SSOL registration, with instructions about obtaining approval from the instructor, or departmental application instructions. SSOL will indicate the procedures when you try to register. If required, the [Registration Adjustment Forms](#) may be submitted electronically to registrar@columbia.edu.

D. Cross-registration in other schools

For courses in other schools, students must follow cross-registration protocols for the school that has listed the course. See the general Information page on the Registrar website at <http://registrar.columbia.edu/content/cross-registration>. In addition to the target school's procedures, GSAS students may have to complete the paper [Registration Adjustment Form](#) and bring it to the GSAS Office of Student Affairs in 107 Low Library. Procedures vary by school.

Students interested in cross-registration at another school at the university must follow the policies and procedures of the host school for adding a course. Keep in mind some schools may have earlier deadlines to add a course. Information about the cross-registration process at other schools can be found at <https://www.gsas.columbia.edu/content/registration>. Students must be officially cross registered for a course and may not audit a course at another school.

Classes at other schools may be limited to students matriculated at those schools. Seats may not be available until after the term begins, and may be opened up to non-matriculants students if or when the classes have seats available. Some classes are instructor-managed via the wait-list feature on SSOL.

E. Directory of Classes

Course information for most CU schools is available through the online Directory of Classes (DoC) at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/bulletin/uwb/>. Courses are listed by Department or Subject. South Asia MA courses are listed under Subject – other South Asia courses are listed under the Department sponsoring the course. The DoC has the most recent information about location, and changes to day or time.

For complete information and a course description, click on the “Section” for the class from the Departmental or Subject course lists. The fields “Approvals Required” and “Note” tell you whether permission is required, if an application is required to enroll, and other unique attributes of the course. To read a description of a course or for information on permissions, click on the Vergil link or the link to the department. Note that 4000-level courses may be listed on department websites under undergraduate courses, but they are open to graduate students as well as undergraduates and are considered graduate-level courses by the university

Courses will be identified as “online” or “in person” or as “hybrid” which will be a mix of online and in person sessions.

F. Academic Calendar, 2024-25

The GSAS Academic Year 2024-25 Calendar is online on the Registrar webpage at:
<https://registrar.columbia.edu/event/academic-calendar>

Fall 2025

August 25-27	GSAS orientation
August 29	SAI MA Orientation
September 1	Deadline to apply for October graduation
	University holiday – Labor Day
September 2	First day of classes, Fall term
September 2 - 12	Late registration and change of program (add/drop) period; late fee for first registration
September 12	Last day with full refund for dropped courses
October 7	Last day to drop a course (with no tuition refund)
November 1	Deadline to apply for February graduation
November 3	Academic holiday – no classes, University open
November 4	Election day – no classes, University Holiday
November 24-26	Advance registration for spring term
November 26	Thanksgiving recess, no classes, university open
November 27 – 28	University Holiday, university closed
December 1	Deadline to apply for May graduation
December 8	Last day of classes, Fall semester
December 12 - 19	Final exam period
December 19	Fall term ends
December 19 – January 19	Winter recess
December 30	Deadline to submit outstanding work for Spring and Summer term incompletes

Spring 2026

January 1	University offices closed.
TBA	Advance registration
January 19	Martin Luther King Day, University Holiday
January 20	First day of classes, Spring 2021 term
January 20 - 30	Late registration and change of program (add/drop) period; late fee for first registration
February 24	Last day with full refund for dropped courses
March 16 – 20	Spring break recess, no classes
March 23	Classes resume
April 13 - 17	Advance registration for summer and fall terms
May 4	Final day of Spring 2021 classes
May 8 - 15	Final exams
May 15	Spring term ends
TBA	GSAS MA Convocation
May 20	University commencement

IV. Registration Policies and Procedures

Students must register for the courses they wish to attend, and they may not attend courses for which they are not registered.

A. Holds

If you cannot register for a course, a Columbia office may have placed a hold on your record that prevents you from registering. The reasons for holds vary; financial holds (non-payment of bills), library holds, and dean's holds are most common. Once you have determined which office placed a hold on your record (listed on SSOL), go to that office to resolve the matter; only the office that placed the hold can remove it.

B. Enrolling in a full course

If a course is full, it is listed as such under "Enrollment" in the online Directory of Classes. Attending a course without officially registering, whether the course is full or not, even if the instructor has given you permission to attend, DOES NOT constitute enrollment. Without the department's permission, the Registrar cannot register a student in a full class.

C. Late registration and fees

A **\$50 late fee** is charged to those who register for the first time after the regular registration period, *during* the first two weeks of the semester. A **\$100 late fee** is charged to those who register for the first time *after* the first two weeks of the semester. **To avoid late fees**, enroll in at least one course the week prior to term and then complete all drop and add courses during the change of program period.

D. Dropping a course and deadlines for refunds

Students should consult the GSAS Academic Calendar for exact dates of the change of program period and other deadlines. See: <https://registrar.columbia.edu/event/academic-calendar>. For more information about the registration process, visit the Registrar's website.

Please note that students taking a course at a school other than GSAS must follow the host school's rules for adding and dropping the course.

Students may add and/or drop courses through SSOL, without penalty, during the change of program period (i.e., the first two weeks of classes for the fall and spring semesters). Students are not charged tuition for courses dropped during this time; dropped courses do not appear on the student's transcript.

After the change of program period, students may continue to drop courses through SSOL until the final deadline to drop a course (consult the Academic Calendar). Courses may be added during this time only with the instructor's approval. Courses dropped during this time are charged at full tuition but do not appear on a student's transcript. See the Registrar's website for detailed instructions on adding and dropping courses after the change of program.

Not attending classes or sending a notification to the instructor does not constitute dropping a course. Students who stop attending a course without formally dropping it by the deadline should be assigned a letter grade based on the same criteria as students who complete the course.

For more complicated registration processes, such as cross-registration between schools after the change of program period, students should use the paper Registration Adjustment Form (from the Registrar web pages. (See <https://registrar.columbia.edu/forms>.)

International Students dropping courses must maintain full-time enrollment (a full or extended residence unit) to keep their student visa and their right to apply for or remain in Columbia housing.

Domestic students must be registered for one residence unit to be eligible for Columbia housing. You must be registered for at least six credits each term to be eligible for most Federal student loans. If you plan on going to school part-time, be sure to contact a financial aid officer in 107 Low Library.

E. Auditing courses and pass/fail

There is no formal audit procedure at Columbia. Courses may be taken for a grade of “R,” which is does not evaluate work completed for the course with the usual letter grades. The ‘R’ option requires instructor permission. A student who elects to take a course for R credit must meet all course requirements other than the final examination, unless the instructor states otherwise in writing, preferably in the form of an email to the student. When a student chooses to take a course for R credit, but does not satisfactorily fulfill the agreed upon conditions for receiving R credit, the instructor may award the mark of IN, UW, or F, depending on what the instructor deems appropriate. The decision to register for an “R” grade is irreversible. The course and grade will appear on all transcripts.

Courses with a grade of R or Pass/Fail do not count toward the South Asia Studies degree, but will count toward the residence unit calculation. Students who pay per point pay the same tuition as they would for any non-audited course. To register for a pass/fail, you must register via SSOL before the late registration period ends. After the late registration period, an “R” grade must be negotiated with the instructor who will submit the grade at the end of the term.

F. Time conflicts

Students cannot take two or more classes whose scheduled times are the same, or which overlap by as little as one minute, without the written permission of the MA Director, as well as the course instructors. Exceptions to this policy require the student to file a Registration adjustment form. See <https://registrar.columbia.edu/content/registration-adjustment-form-add-drop-classes>.

G. Leaves of Absence

Many reasons may compel students to discontinue their studies temporarily. A leave of absence allows a student who must interrupt his or her studies for a compelling reason—for example, a sustained medical condition that prevents attendance or a personal matter requiring absence from

campus—to be exempt from the Continuous Registration requirement. Leaves will not be granted retroactively.

Students who intend to take a leave of absence must submit a Request for a Leave of Absence to the Office of the Dean. For the form, and more information, see the GSAS Student Policy Handbook at <https://gsas.columbia.edu/student-guide/policy-handbook>. Until students are notified by the Office of the Dean that the leave has been approved, they should assume that they are registered and are expected to fulfill their academic and/or financial responsibilities, including completing course work. Students who wish to request a leave of absence must complete a leave of absence form and submit it to gsas-studentaffairs@columbia.edu with supporting documents. Time on official leave does not count toward the five years allotted to complete the degree.

When planning to return to Columbia, students on official leave should keep the MA Director advised of their schedule and plans to enroll. Students who have left without officially submitting leave of absence forms must apply for reinstatement. Students returning from leave register during the registration period immediately before the semester (August for fall, January for spring). Students returning from an approved leave of absence should submit the Return from a Leave of Absence form six weeks before the start of the semester in which they wish to return. See <https://gsas.columbia.edu/student-guide/policy-handbook/leaves-absence-withdrawals-and-reinstatement/reinstatement>>. Students who have decided not to return from a leave of absence should notify the university that they are withdrawing from the degree program.

MA students who have been on an unapproved leave for more than four semesters must [apply again for admission](#).

H. Withdrawal

A student in good academic standing who is not subject to discipline will always be given an honorable discharge if he or she wishes to withdraw from the University. Withdrawal is the act of formally giving notice that one is leaving the University without intending to return at a future time. Students who intend to withdraw from the University must submit a Request for Withdrawal to the GSAS Office of Student Affairs. Until students are notified by GSAS that the withdrawal has been approved, they should assume that they are registered and expected to fulfill their academic and/or financial responsibilities, including completing course work. For the Withdrawal form and policies, see <http://gsas.columbia.edu/content/withdrawals>.

Any student withdrawing must notify the MA Director in writing. The approval of the Associate Dean is required for all withdrawals. The student's responsibilities, academic and financial, continue in all courses for which the student has registered until the withdrawal has been approved and accepted. Tuition is refunded on a percentage basis depending on the week in which official withdrawal occurs, as per the Registrar policies. Application fees and late fees are not refundable. For refunds related to health services and health insurance, students should contact Health Services.

V. MMR immunization, meningitis vaccination, and Coronavirus

All students are subject to two immunization requirements (MMR and meningitis).

See < <https://gsas.columbia.edu/student-guide/policy-handbook/immunization-requirements>> for details and information on how to comply.

Columbia University will require all students to be vaccinated for COVID-19, and facilities on campus will provide testing and vaccinations for all students. Please visit this page for general GSAS information and resources:

<https://gsas.columbia.edu/student-guide/coronavirus-information-gsas-students>

GSAS and the Arts and Science Graduate Council (ASGC) have partnered to create a GSAS Community COVID-19 Emergency Fund for registered master's and doctoral students in Arts and Sciences programs who have urgent and time-sensitive COVID-19-related financial emergencies that cannot be addressed by any other source. (See above link for more information.)

VI. Financial Aid

Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships: MA students who will study a South Asia language as part of their program may be eligible to apply for a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship. You must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident in order to apply.

Administered by the South Asia Institute, through a grant from the U.S. Education Department (USED), FLAS awards can be for Academic Year study at Columbia, or for intensive summer language study in the U.S. or abroad. SAI is authorized to award FLAS for the study of Intermediate or Advanced Bengali, Hindi, Persian, Punjabi, Tamil and Urdu. Other modern South Asia languages (Marathi, Sinhala, Telugu, etc.) may be authorized for summer study with the approval of the Institute and USED. Graduate Academic Year awards consist of \$18,000 tuition and a stipend of \$20,000. Summer awards cover tuition up to \$5,000 and a stipend of \$2,500.

Incoming MA students at GSAS receive full tuition funding for the first year of study (plus the above stipend). Students may apply for a second year, but the fellowship covers \$18,000 tuition and a stipend of \$20,000 only.

The annual Academic Year FLAS competition at Columbia is open to students in GSAS, SIPA, and Teacher's College. Academic Year fellows must enroll in one language class and one area studies class in both the fall and spring semesters. The annual Summer FLAS competition is open to all graduate students in all Columbia schools.

For information and general guidelines, please see the full announcement guidelines on the SAI website at <https://sai.columbia.edu/content/foreign-language-and-area-studies-fellowships>. The Summer and Academic Year deadline is early to mid-February. All applicants must apply on-line, via the GSAS Internal Fellowship application pages. Applicants must submit the FAFSA to be eligible for FLAS. Contact Associate Director William Carrick wac2112@columbia.edu if you have questions about the FLAS program.

Federal Work-Study, Loans, and on-campus employment: Students enrolled in the MA program who are US citizens or permanent residents may be eligible for both federal work-study and loan programs. A FAFSA application must be on file with Columbia for both. Please visit the Graduate Financial Aid page on the Student Financial Services page for detailed information about eligibility, direct loans, work-study, etc. Work-study and non-work study positions are available across the entire Columbia campus. Work-study policies and Job listings for campus employment can be found at <https://sfs.columbia.edu/content/work-study-overview> International Students are eligible to be employed on campus in non-federal-work-study positions only.

Fulbright Program: Incoming international students may be eligible to apply for the Fulbright Foreign Students program. See their website for details about eligibility and application at <http://foreign.fulbrightonline.org>. Many U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad have a Fulbright Officer or other staff available to advise applicants for the Fulbright program, and country-specific information about the program on their respective websites.

A small number of highly qualified incoming MA students receive partial tuition scholarships that are funded by SAI and the Graduate School. Applicants will automatically be considered for these competitive awards; there is no separate application process.

Funds for conference travel: Students may apply to the Graduate Student Advisory Council for up to \$500 for individual travel grants to defray the costs associated with presenting their work at academic or professional conferences and workshops. More information on this competitive award can be found at <https://council.gsas.columbia.edu/content/student-travel-grant>.

VII. Student Life

SAI Colloquium series: The South Asia Institute hosts a colloquium series and other events during the academic year that bring leading scholars of South Asia to Columbia from across the US, Europe, and South Asia.

Many of these events take place on Mondays at 4pm and Fridays at 10am and are attended by South Asia faculty members and by students from other programs. These events will include a discussion period with the speakers, students and faculty. Event modalities will depend on university policies.

MA students are encouraged to attend the colloquium lectures and to participate in other activities and conferences hosted by the Institute to familiarize themselves with the scholarly field of South Asia studies, and to interact with the speakers, and with other graduate students working on South Asia in other departments and schools. You will find the colloquium schedule on the website under “Upcoming events.” The SAI listserv will notify you about SAI events and other events of interest to South Asia scholars, on campus and around New York. [The Columbia Arts Initiative](#) is a resource for events and ticket discounts for various cultural activities in NYC.

In addition to providing a set of rules and regulations for MA students, the web pages of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences include links to valuable information regarding various

aspects of life at Columbia. Check them for information on everything from housing to late-night shuttle bus service on Morningside Heights.

Although many students may spend only a few hours (or none) each week on campus, all are members of the Columbia University community and are encouraged to participate in University organizations and activities. We urge you to become involved in campus activities and organizations. The Graduate Student Center and lounges in Philosophy Hall are open to all GSAS graduate students and are a formal and informal space for student interactions and information sharing. Seating in these university spaces will be monitored for compliance with public health protocols.

The Arts and Science Graduate Council is a student government organization at Columbia University. Council membership consists of student-elected departmental representatives from the PhD and free-standing MA programs of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. For more information, please visit <https://council.gsas.columbia.edu/>.

VIII. Email and Student Services Online (SSOL)

A. E-mail

All students must create a Columbia e-mail account. *Columbia policy specifies that Columbia sends official communication by email and that students must check e-mail on a frequent and consistent basis.* Please note that a student's failure to read University communications in a timely manner does not absolve that student from knowing and complying with the content of such communications. Both GSAS and the MA program will use your Columbia email as a primary contact. Please make sure to monitor your inbox, or to auto-forward these messages to another email account that you check often.

Your Columbia e-mail address is linked to your University Network ID (UNI) and password, which you will use often for a wide range of Columbia University digital services. For your convenience, your Columbia e-mail can be configured to auto-forward to another email address. Visit "Manage my UNI" at <http://cuit.columbia.edu/cuit/manage-my-uni>.

Please familiarize yourself with Columbia's IT policies at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/policy/>. Unauthorized attempts to gain access to any account or system not belonging to you on any University system or on any system outside the University network are not permitted. No University system or network may be used for any purpose or in a manner that violates University statutes or policies or federal, state or local law.

B. SSOL – Student Services On-Line: <https://ssol.columbia.edu/>

The Student Services On-Line system (SSOL) is a helpful information center for Columbia students. From the SSOL main menu, you can navigate to screens that allow you to view your grades, your schedule, your billing information, your registration appointments, and holds on your record. You may also register for courses, pay your account, and change your contact information on SSOL.

IX. Important office and contact information

**CUIT (Columbia University
Information Technology)**
202 Philosophy Hall
<https://www.cuit.columbia.edu/>
Email: askcuit@columbia.edu
(212) 854-1919

Columbia Libraries
212-854-7309
www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb

**GSAS Compass
Office of Graduate Career Development**
106 Low Library
Email: gsas.compass@columbia.edu
<https://www.gsas.columbia.edu/content/career-development>

GSAS Financial Aid
107 Low Memorial Library
Email: gsas-finaid@columbia.edu
<https://www.gsas.columbia.edu/content/financing-your-education>
(212) 854-3808

Health Services
John Jay Hall and Wien Hall
Email: health@columbia.edu
(212) 854-2284 (general questions)
(212) 854-3286 (insurance)
<https://www.health.columbia.edu/>

Disability Services
Lerner Hall, 7th Floor
212-854-2388
health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services

Dodge Fitness Center
212-854-7149
<https://perec.columbia.edu/>

Columbia Card Center
204 Kent Hall
<https://ssc.columbia.edu/id-center>
Email: idcard@columbia.edu
(212) 854-5883

**International Students and Scholars
Office (ISSO)**
525 Riverside Drive
<https://isso.columbia.edu/>
Email: isso@columbia.edu
(212) 854-3587

Student Services Center
205 Kent Hall
(212) 854-4400
<https://services.columbia.edu/content/services-all-students>

Ask Us
<http://askus.columbia.edu>

See the South Asia Institute website, the Columbia University online directory, and the GSAS website for additional offices and contact information.

GSAS Student Handbook: <https://gsas.columbia.edu/student-guide/policy-handbook>
GSAS New Student Guide: <https://www.gsas.columbia.edu/content/new-student-guide>