

The Beginner's Guide to Medical Genomics

A how-to on your brand-new program!

Made and adapted with love by your Medical Genomics representatives

Foreword

Hello and congratulations on receiving your offer to the Medical Genomics program at the University of Toronto! Our names are Kayla and Michelle and we are the 2025/2026 MedGen representatives. We have adapted this document as a means to provide prospective and incoming students with more information about the program.

We wanted to share some things to get you up to speed so that you feel prepared to start graduate school off strong. These are tips and advice from us and others from the MedGen program. that we wish we had known coming into the program. These range from things like what to wear on the first day to what to expect when living in Toronto! We hope you find this helpful and get something out of it. If you have specific questions about admissions and registration, you can email mgc.info@utoronto.ca. General questions about the program can also be directed to medical.genomics@utoronto.ca.

Don't be a stranger! We'd love to hear from you and are happy to answer any questions that you have, especially if your question wasn't answered here. You can email us at medgenreps@gmail.com or our personal emails at kayla.krolikowski@utoronto.ca and michelle.mariaprabhu@mail.utoronto.ca

We hope to see you soon!
Kayla and Michelle

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Lifestyle and Expectations

Before jumping into this section, it's important to remember that this is a professional program and you will be held to professional standards. That being said, the program is not strictly business and casual dress (e.g. jeans, sweaters) is more than okay! All the students and faculty are very friendly and approachable and it's important that you feel comfortable expressing yourself however you feel is best for you. As one of our faculty members said best on our first day, as long as you don't show up in pajamas, you're good!

In general, this program mimics a professional lifestyle, starting your day at 9 or 10 AM every day of the week. Classes run two to three hours a day depending on the day, meaning there is about a 12-hour in-class commitment a week. On top of this, there will be assignments and pre-lecture preparations (readings, prep for discussions) which will be important to understanding the day's lecture material. While you will only have about 12 hours in class, this is still a full-time program and you will be expected to spend time on classwork outside of class time. This will definitely be important in the biostatistics class. Your summer schedule will be a bit different, but it should be no problem once you get into the swing of things!

Group work and collaboration are some key parts of the MedGen program and curriculum, and you will very quickly find yourself closely acquainted with your peers. Typically, cohorts have about 20 students, so it will be easy to get to know your classmates. Group work is a staple of the program with many in-class assignments along with long-standing assignments being completed as a group. Students tend to come from all different academic backgrounds providing the cohorts with ranging levels of expertise in different fields! Don't be shy to step out of your comfort zone and try to work with everyone in your cohort, you will learn a lot more this way.

It's important to remember that some students will be living right in the downtown core while others will be commuting from the far corners of the GTA and beyond. For this reason, public transport and the TTC will become your best friend during the course of the year. Take a look at the [TTC service map](#) and [GO Transit map](#) for a better idea of what areas of the city (and GTHA) it serves. The closest subway station to classes and important buildings will be Queen's Park and Museum Stations, so you can plan accordingly (pro tip: if you're coming in early for class, I love taking a stroll through campus, it's quite gorgeous to walk through all the buildings -Michelle)!

Don't be afraid to reach out to us or others in your cohort who have lived in Toronto for some help with figuring out your commute! Also keep in mind that everyone has a different living situation and all that changes is how long your commute will be. There are some great study spaces and areas to hang out in on campus if you ever

find yourself here after class. Check out the [“Program Resources”](#) section for more information about these spaces.

Program Details

Tuition

While we won't go into too much detail about tuition here, we just want you all to be aware of the fact that your summer semester tuition is INCLUDED in the cost of your first year! You have one payment due for each of the fall and winter semesters, and the cost of the summer semester is included in these costs. For more information about tuition costs and fees, please refer to the University's [Tuition and Fees Lookup Tool](#) or reach out to our graduate program coordinator, [Sabeen Nauman](#), for specific questions. You can also find important dates including payment deadlines in the [Sessional Dates](#) calendar from the School of Graduate Studies.

For more information about how to pay your tuition, check out the [student accounts website!](#)

Important Dates

While most important dates will be communicated to you by core faculty throughout the school term, it is a good idea to stay on top of important sessional dates as outlined by SGS! Please refer to the [Sessional Dates](#) calendar to get an idea of when your classes will start. Please note that, while the MedGen program stays pretty faithful to this schedule for the fall and winter semesters, your schedule in the summer will NOT be the same as that outlined in the calendar - more information about your summer schedule will be provided by core faculty as you approach the summer, but you can expect your summer semester to begin at the end of April, about two weeks after the end of the winter semester.

You will have reading weeks to give you a break from course content and a chance to catch up on outstanding assignments! You will have a reading week in both fall and winter semesters, and another reading week at the end of the winter semester. You can expect these to be around mid-November, mid-February, and early April. There is one more reading week in mid-June before the year ends in mid-July. You then have all of August off before your second year in September! Details and specific dates of these breaks will be communicated to you by the core faculty.

Curriculum

The important courses that you will be taking throughout your time in this program can be found on the [Medical Genomics website](#). In your first semester, you will have **MMG3001Y**: Advanced Human Genetics and **MMG3002Y**: Biological Statistics. In your next semester, Advanced Human Genetics carries over, and you then begin **MMG3003Y**: Genomic Methodologies. This semester runs until about the beginning of April before diving right into a week-long NGS course, **MMG3202H**: Next-Generation Sequencing — Data Generation Laboratory. Following this course, you will dive right back into Genomic Methodologies, with occasional classes for

MMG3203H: Next-Generation Sequencing — Data Analysis and Interpretation, and **MMG3201H:** Medical Genomics Graduate Professional Development. The dates of these two courses will be shared with you at a later time. The second-year courses begin in the fall of your second year; check out the Medical Genomics site for more information.

Prior Experience

One important thing to remember about this program is that there is no formal requirement for a genetics or bioinformatics/computer science background! We welcome everyone to this program and recognize that everyone has different skills that they can bring to this program. That being said, it would be a good idea to brush up on some core genetics and coding concepts if you aren't familiar with them!

Khan Academy is a great resource for learning many different topics. They offer a range of biology courses that all include a genetics module, so play around! Of those offered, we think the [UP Class 12th Biology](#) course units [four](#) and [five](#) are great preparation. But feel free to play around with the various courses offered and find what works best for you!

There is also recommended preparation for the biostatistics course that you will take. You should receive an email with some more information and suggested courses, but we will include them here for you! If you already have some coding experience, feel free to just take a quick look through the [self-assessment](#) to make sure you can answer all the questions on there!

Suggested courses:

- [R programming](#) (Coursera)
- [R Basics for Data Analysis](#) (dataquest)
- [R Programming Fundamentals](#) (edX)
- [Data Science: R Basics](#) (edX)

You also have access to [LinkedIn Learning](#) through U of T which offers amazing courses on many topics! These go far past the level of knowledge that you will need for this program, but some good courses to keep in mind are [Linux System Engineer: Bash Shell Scripting for Automation](#) and [R for Data Science: Analysis and Visualization](#).

Program Resources

One important thing that many of you may be wondering about is housing in Toronto. Finding a place to live in Toronto can be difficult! A couple of great places to start are the [Off-Campus Housing website](#) to find roommates or other available rooms around campus. You can also meet with the Housing team through [CLNx](#) by booking an appointment under Housing Appointments. They can help you discuss listings, housing scams, and give advice surrounding renting. If you're interested in living on campus, there is one dedicated graduate residence, aptly named [Graduate House](#). Take a look at your options, and don't be afraid to reach out for more help!

There are a lot of resources available for you to access as a graduate student at the University of Toronto! This is by no means a complete list of tools and resources, but it is a very comprehensive list that we hope will be helpful to you. You may have had less-than-ideal experiences with some of these resources in the past, but we want to ensure that all of them are available to others if they would like to access them. If there are resources that you are looking for that this list doesn't cover, reach out and we'll try to connect you with someone! Similarly, if there is something that you think should be added to the list, please let us know!

Campus and Student Life

[U of T Student Life](#)

[Centre for International Experience \(CIE\)](#)

[Student Clubs and Groups](#)

[UTGSU Building Rooms and Gym](#)

[Hart House](#)

[U of T Gyms](#)

[U of T Intramurals](#)

[Career and Co-Curricular Learning Network \(CLNx\)](#)

[Folio](#)

Academic and Educational

[Accessibility Services](#)

[Graduate Centre for Academic Communication \(GCAC\)](#)

[U of T Continuing Studies English Language Program](#)

[Statistics Aid Centre](#)

[Study Hubs](#)

[Graduate Writing Groups](#)

[Grad Productivity Group](#)

[U of T Libraries](#)

Food and Supplies

[UTSU Food Bank](#)

[Daily Bread Food Bank](#)

[Toronto Food Banks and Community Food Programs](#)

On-Campus Mental Health

[Navi: Your U of T Resource Finder](#)

[Health and Wellness Centre](#)

Good2Talk - call **1-866-925-5454**

U of T Telus Health Student Support - call **1-844-451-9700** or **001-416-380-6578** if you are outside of North America

Off-Campus Mental Health

[Gerstein Crisis Centre](#)

[CAMH](#)

[Distress Centres of Greater Toronto](#)

[LGBT Youth Line](#)

[Kids Help Phone](#)

[Stella's Place](#)

9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline - call or text **988**

Sexual and Reproductive Health

[Sexual Violence Prevention & Support Centre](#)

[Planned Parenthood Toronto](#)

[Toronto Rape Crisis Centre](#)

[U of T Sexual Education Centre](#)

LGBTQIA2S+ Resources

[Queer Orientation](#)

[Sexual & Gender Diversity Office](#)

[LGBTOUT](#)

[LGBT Youth Line](#)

[Two-Spirited People of the First Nations](#)

[519 Church Street Community Centre](#)

Other Important Resources

[Family Care Office](#)

[Graduate House](#)

[Off-Campus Housing](#)

[Koffler Student Services Centre/TCard Services](#)

[The Multi-Faith Centre](#)

Advice From Upper-Years

We reached out to MedGen students to ask them what else they wish they had known coming into the program. Many students emphasized that U of T has a ton of great resources that they learnt about along the way which made their experience at the university much better. A more detailed list of resources can be found in the [Program Resources](#) section of this document. One important resource in particular is the GCAC for building your writing skills. It is also important to find your space - former students suggest looking around at the variety of buildings and study spaces accessible for MedGen students. One of these locations is the study space in the [Old Admin](#) building! You should receive more information about this if you accept your offer to the program. Check out the included [map](#) to familiarize yourself with different important U of T buildings!

One of the biggest pieces of advice we can give you as students in the program is that it is always a good time to network with others in the field. The MedGen program makes it easier for you to connect as there are many opportunities to connect and chat with alumni of the program. Above this, there will be many guest lectures in core first-year classes that give you the direct opportunity to talk to and ask questions to professionals at the forefront of the field. Don't be afraid and don't hesitate to reach out to these folks as a resource to learn more about specialties and careers within medical genomics. It's completely normal if you haven't found your niche yet! Your courses and assignments are structured in a way that allows you to explore your interests (keep in mind the assignments you enjoy most, and consider networking with professionals in that field).

Finally, the most important piece of advice is that you are doing an amazing job and that you should be proud of yourself. Deciding on grad school can be very stressful and even just receiving acceptance to the MedGen program shows that you are killing it! It's okay to be overwhelmed, that's what we are here for! We hope to be able to help with any questions or concerns you may have.

Campus Map

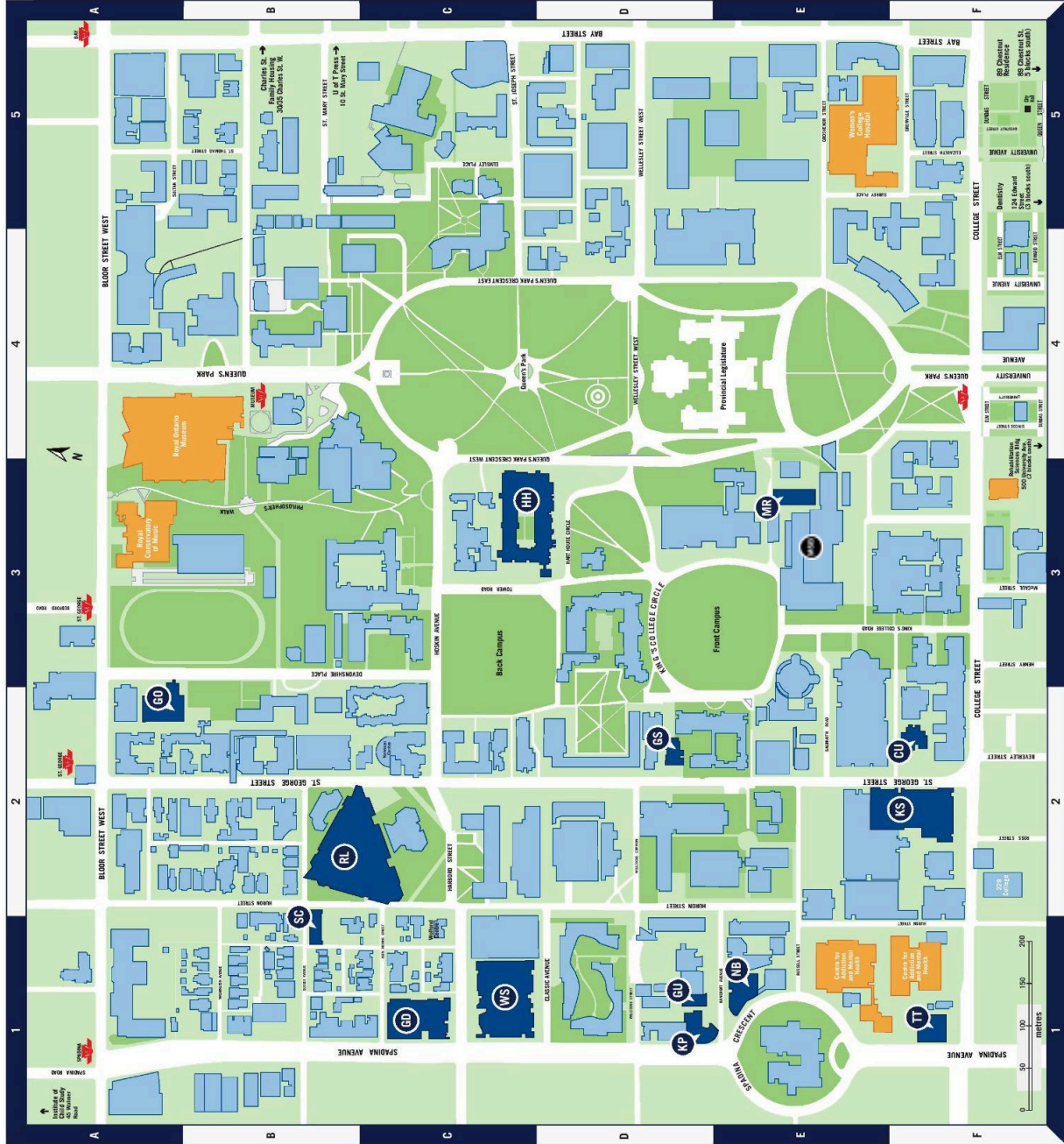
Get Oriented: Places & Spaces on St. George Campus (UTSG)

LEGEND

- SC - Gradlife Office
- GD - Grad Room / Graduate House
- RL - Roberts Library
- WS - Athletic Centre
- KP - Multi-Faith Centre
- GU - University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union (UTGSU)
- NB - Indigenous Student Services/First Nations House
- GD - Goldring Centre for High Performance Sport
- GS - School of Graduate Studies, Student Academic Services
- KS - Koffler Student Services Centre (includes Student Success Centre, Health & Wellness, Family Care Office, and more!)
- CU - Centre for International Experience (CIE)
- HH - Hart House
- MR - Graduate Centre for Academic Communication (GCAC)
- TT - Accessibility Services Building
- MSB - Medical Sciences Building



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Closing Remarks

We hope you have so much fun in this program, we are so thrilled to have you here! While this guide does cover many topics, it is not meant to be a complete overview of everything the MedGen program has to offer and is meant to be a way to get you introduced to the program, curriculum, the university, and Toronto as a whole. We are extremely happy that you have made it this far into this document and look forward greatly to meeting you in the fall if you do decide to accept your offer to the MedGen program!

Moving forward, please feel free to use us as a resource and reach out via email with any remaining questions. As your reps, we are here to support you and hope to be able to provide you with any questions you have or guide you to the right person to answer them if they are out of the scope of our role. Please also don't hesitate to browse and look through the extensive information about the program available on the [Medical Genomics website](#) to get more in-depth information about course structure or other key facts about the program.

We hope to see you in the fall!
Kayla and Michelle