Frequently Asked Questions

Our faculty and staff have compiled a list of frequently asked questions. Please click the link for answers to the following questions. If you have further questions after reviewing our answers please contact the program head.

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   - What are the options for studying GIS at BCIT?
   - What is the Online GIS program option?
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   - What programming courses should I take to prepare for the full-time program?
All Students: Entry into the ADP or B.Tech. Degree as a full-time or part-time student.

Why choose to study GIS at BCIT?

The BCIT GIS programs are renowned for their intensive workload and technical content. The BCIT GIS courses are developed in consultation with leading employers. Courses do not consist of simple pre-packaged software vendor training but are each uniquely designed to help you learn to solve problems and work independently. The best way to learn something is by actually doing it. Yes, you will have lectures but most of your time will be spent directly applying what you’ve learned. Our GIS Advisory committee provides direct input to curriculum development to ensure that you’ll be at the forefront of the latest developments in your industry. BCIT instructors have years of practical expertise and bring an insider’s perspective of their industry-knowledge and experience that will benefit you in the classroom and after you graduate.

What are the options for studying GIS at BCIT?

Advanced Diploma in GIS

- Option 1: over nine months as a full-time student at the BCIT Burnaby Campus
- Option 2: over two years entirely as an Online student
- Option 3: over up to five years as a part-time student with all courses taken online or with a combination of online courses and BCIT Burnaby campus courses.

Bachelor of Technology in GIS (Degree)

- Option 1: over two years with the first year as a full-time student at the BCIT Burnaby Campus and the second year as an Online student
- Option 2: over three years entirely as an Online student
- Option 3: over up to seven years as part-time student with all courses taken online or with a combination of online courses and the BCIT Burnaby campus courses.

What is the Online GIS program option?

You can complete the entire GIS B.Tech degree or GIS Advanced Diploma online. This means you need never attend the BCIT campus although you will complete identical course material and computer practical work as an on-campus student. Each online course is organized in a similar manner: you can use your computer to listen to lectures, connect to the BCIT computer servers, use GIS software and complete GIS software assignments just as you would in a BCIT campus computer lab, discuss questions with other class members, connect up with your instructor in virtual office hours when the instructor can help with problems and demonstrate software or access your computer to help you. You do not install GIS software on your home computer so can use a MAC, Windows or UNIX operating system machine. Read more about our online option.
Why choose to study entirely Online?

You do not live near the BCIT Burnaby [British Columbia, Canada] campus or you have a job and want to study part-time.

What is the difference between the GIS Advanced Diploma Program and the Bachelor of Technology in GIS?

The ADP is intended for students who already have a degree or diploma, and the B. Tech is intended for technology graduates who wish to attain a baccalaureate credential. The technical content of the two programs is identical although B.Tech student must select the project course. The B. Tech also consists of additional management and Liberal Arts courses, and requires 6 months approved GIS work experience before graduation. Consult the Bachelor Of Technology for more information on the degree program.

How does the BCIT GIS program differ from a GIS Master’s degree?

Most GIS master’s degree focus mainly on GI science and theory. At BCIT we provide a tightly structured, comprehensive education and training program in GIS technology, designed to prepare you for a career in GIS.

What qualifications do I need to get in?

Please refer to the ADP entrance requirements or B.Tech entrance requirements. Typically students have a Degree in Geography, Geology, Environmental Science, or Engineering, or a Diploma in Forestry, Survey, Computer Science, Engineering, or Urban Planning. Other backgrounds are also acceptable. For example, past students had degrees or diplomas in such areas as biology, physics, economics, mining, photogrammetry, or archaeology.

I have an Associate Degree. Do I qualify for entry?

Students with an Associate degree may be admitted to the program. Please refer to the ADP entrance requirements or B.Tech entrance requirements.

I don't have a degree or a diploma. Do I qualify for entry?

If you have two years or more of university study and the credits that you have earned are equivalent to an Associate degree, then you may be admitted to the program.

What computer background do I need?

You must be a competent Personal Computer [PC] user and be able to use Windows operating systems, and ‘office’ programs [word-processing, spreadsheets], with confidence. You should have at least introductory level programming skills. You do not need to be a ‘computer expert’ but should have an
aptitude for computers, enjoy working with computers and learning computer software. You should be ‘web literate’ and be able to create simple web pages with an HTML editor.

What are the English language entrance requirements?

Students applying to the GIS ADP must meet BCIT’s general English language entrance requirements.

What do I need to submit for my application?

The application is all online and all documents you need are listed on the Admission & Registration Pages.

Is there a January intake?

Full-time students can only start their studies in September each year. Part-time students can start their studies in September, January or April of each year. See the suggested schedules below.

All Students: Courses and Program Content

What is the content of the GIS program?

The program starts by covering computer systems, GIS theory and GIS software. This is followed by more advanced GIS theory and software, and related GIS topics such as digital mapping, remote sensing, and database systems. The course concludes with GIS management and acquisition issues. A major GIS project or practicum is undertaken during the second part of the course to help students use all of their GIS knowledge and skills and to involve students with the GIS industry.

How did BCIT decide which courses should be in the GIS program?

The courses in the GIS program are selected and designed based on ongoing input from the Program Advisory Committee, government and the GIS industry. The main goal is to provide students with current relevant skills and knowledge needed in the GIS industry.

Can I get credit for equivalent courses I have completed at University or College?  
How do I do this?

Yes, if approved by the GIS Department. Once you have been admitted into the Program you can complete a Course Credit Exemption application form [available at Student Records]. You will need to submit supporting documentation, such as a course outline, in order for the Department to assess this.

How do I choose between the GIS Project and the GIS Practicum courses?
The GIS Project is a campus-based project which typically involves applied research or development, in consultation with an industry 'sponsor'. The GIS Practicum is workplace placed, where you will be involved with a company’s GIS projects. GIS Btech students must complete a project. GIS ADP students can complete a project or a practicum. You are strongly encouraged to start thinking about project topics that interest you. However, it is not essential to have a project/practicum before coming into the program. The GIS faculty are in contact with industry representatives and will have some suggested projects/practica to assist you. Most students find their own project/practica after entering the program.

Can I continue if I fail a course?

You can repeat courses. You may have to take an evening or Saturday makeup course and your graduation may be delayed. If the failed course is a prerequisite for other courses you will have to first successfully complete it. However, you may still be able to carry on with other courses.

All Students: BCIT and GIS

Where is BCIT? What is it like there?

The GIS program is delivered on BCIT’s campus in Burnaby British Columbia which is part of metro Vancouver. Vancouver is consistently named one of the best cities in the world to live, and the surrounding region has outstanding natural beauty, year round outdoor activities, a temperate climate, and numerous cultural and social events.

Is there a lot of GIS activity in British Columbia and the Metro Vancouver region?

Yes, there are GIS user and professional groups, software and consulting firms, and a diverse GIS industry, including environmental, forestry, geology, utility, and business companies, and municipal/regional/federal government and First Nations organizations.

What will I be able to do once I have completed the program?

You will be able to use GIS software, hardware and peripheral devices, customize GIS software, develop and design GIS databases, analyze GIS data, write software to convert GIS data formats and write utility programs, use image analysis software and integrate images and other types of GIS information, discuss and use GIS theory to make decisions concerning GIS implementation, manage a GIS, train GIS users, implement and complete a GIS project, compare and discuss GIS software products.

What type of work do the GIS graduates do?

The majority of GIS graduates are working for either private industry (forestry, GIS vendors, natural resource exploration, real estate, business geographics, computer systems) consulting companies (environmental, engineering, forestry, mapping, scanning, software) or government agencies (municipal, provincial, federal).
The graduates are developing GIS databases, using GIS to analyze data and predict the result of planned changes, managing GIS projects, planning the acquisition of GIS technology, developing GIS custom systems and training GIS users.

**Full-time Students: ADP or B.Tech. Degree**

**How many students are in the full-time programs?**

The full-time programs have a capacity of 45 students.

**Do I have to select courses when registering [like University]?**

No, full-time students are automatically registered for all the courses offered in the nine month academic year. Part-time students register on a course by course basis.

**How long will the GIS ADP or B.Tech. Degree take me to complete on a full-time basis?**

ADP Students: Nine or ten months. Classes begin in September. If you choose a project or ‘gradual’ mode practicum, you will complete your course work by the end of May. ‘Block’ mode practicum students complete at the end of June.

B.Tech. Degree Students: A minimum of two years. The first year is the same as the full-time ADP as above except that you must take the project option. The second year consists of six online courses (some may have an on-campus option as well) plus acquiring six months of relevant GIS work experience.

**How should I prepare for the full-time program?**

You should try and complete 1 or 2 first-term courses before entry. This will improve your chances of being accepted into the program and reduce your term workload. Recommended courses are GIST 7100, GIST 7010 and GIST 7128. These courses may be taken as “night school” classes at the BCIT Burnaby campus or via the Internet.

**What programming courses should I take to prepare for the full-time program?**

GIST 7010 which is available online as well as on campus.
**Part-time Students : ADP or B.Tech.Degree**

**Can I complete the entire program through distance learning [via the Internet]?**

Yes, all courses are available online.

**How long will the GIS program take me to complete on a part-time basis?**

This depends on your educational background and on how many courses you take each semester. It is possible to complete the ADP in two years or the B.Tech in three years as an Online student. This Online schedule commits you to at least 30 hours per week of course work between September and the end of June each year and is only suitable for a student with a part-time job. Students who are working full-time should be able to complete the part-time ADP in four years or B.Tech in five years.

**Program Abandonment**

- Students approved for a part-time studies program are expected to register and complete courses on a continuous basis.
- A student that has not completed a course from their approved program of study over a period of three consecutive academic terms will be considered to have abandoned the program.
- Throughout the duration of the program, a student is permitted a maximum of five academic terms where they are not required to register and complete a course from their approved program of study. Students who exceed the five term maximum will be considered to have abandoned the program.
- Students who have abandoned their approved program of study and wish to be reinstated will be required to apply for the program approval for a current credential. BCIT cannot guarantee that courses taken prior to this reapplication will be credited towards the current credential.

*BCIT Policy 5103 – Student Evaluation [PDF]* permits a maximum of three attempts to successfully complete each course within a credential.

**Are there suggested schedules of courses for part-time ADP students or for part-time B. Tech students?**

Yes. The following tables show sample schedules of studies.

**Part-Time Student: A Four Year Schedule**

This schedule is for the ADP courses and the technical B.Tech courses. B.Tech students must select GISt 8125 and must also complete other courses.
Want to follow this schedule? You can try our courses that do not have prerequisites (GIST 7010, 7100, 7108, 7109, 7128, 8118) before applying to the ADP or B.Tech program but you should apply as soon as you have decided to take a program as your admission is not guaranteed.

All courses are offered online. GIST 7100, GIST 7010 and GIST 7128 are also offered at the BCIT Burnaby campus.

1st Year (note: p. is a prerequisite course number). You can start in the Fall (September), Winter (January) or Spring (April)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If Starting in the Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GIST 7100</td>
<td>GIST 8128 (p. 7128)</td>
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<td>GIST 8118</td>
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<tr>
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<td>GIST 7109</td>
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<td>GIST 8118</td>
<td>GIST 7128</td>
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<th>If Starting in the Spring</th>
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<tr>
<td>GIST 7100</td>
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### 2nd Year

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<tr>
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<th>Fall</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GIST 7010</td>
<td>GIST 7010</td>
<td>GIST 8010 [p. 7010]</td>
<td>One of GIST 8138 [p. 8010,8128] OR GIST 8117 [p.7108]. Take one as these courses are offered every other year</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIST 7108</td>
<td>GIST 8128 if not already taken</td>
<td>GIST 8106 [p. 7010,8128]. Take this course if available as it is only offered every other year</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GIST 8118 if not already taken</td>
<td>GIST 7109 if not already taken</td>
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### 3rd Year

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<tr>
<td>GIST 7130</td>
<td>GIST 8100 [p. 7100,7130,8010] or GIST 8132 [p. 7132]. Take GIST 8100 if available as it is only offered every other year</td>
<td>One of GIST 8138 [p. 8010, 8128] OR GIST 8117 [p.7108]. Take the available course</td>
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### 4th Year

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<tr>
<td>GIST 7122 (p. dept approval)</td>
<td>GIST 8100 (p. 7100,7130,8010) or GIST 8132 (p. 7132). Take GIST 8100 if not already taken.</td>
<td>GIST 8110 (p. most)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TMGT 7102, TMGT 7142</td>
<td>GIST 8125/6 (p. most)</td>
<td>GIST 8125/6 (p. most)</td>
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Advanced Diploma students have completed all courses at the end of year 4.

### 5th Year for B.Tech Students only

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BUSA 7250</td>
<td>LIBS 7002</td>
<td>TMGT Elective</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIBS 7001</td>
<td>LIBS Elective</td>
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LIBS courses have a prerequisite equal to the equivalent of three credits of university/college composition
B.Tech students must all complete six months of relevant GIS work experience [(after completing all
technical GIS courses)]

Part-time Online Student: Option for a Fast-Track two year course schedule starting September of an
'even-numbered' year.

Want to follow this 'fast-track' schedule? You must apply to the GIS ADP or B.Tech program as a part-time
student.

**Year 1 [note: p. is a prerequisite course number]**

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>GIST 8010 [p. 7010]</td>
<td>GIST 7109</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIST 7100</td>
<td>GIST 8118</td>
<td>GIST 8106 [p. 7010,8128]</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIST 7108</td>
<td>GIST 8128 [p. 7128]</td>
<td>GIST 8117 [p.7108]</td>
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<td>GIST 7128</td>
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**Year 2**

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<tr>
<td>GIST 7122 (p. dept approval)</td>
<td>GIST 8100 [p. 7100,7130, 8010]</td>
<td>GIST 8110 [p. most]</td>
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<td>Course Code</td>
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<tr>
<td>TMGT 7102</td>
<td>GIST 8109 [p. 7130]</td>
<td>GIST 8138 [p. 8010, 8128]</td>
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<tr>
<td>TMGT 7142</td>
<td>GIST 8132 [p. 7132]</td>
<td>GIST 8125 / 8126 [p. most]</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIST 7130 [p. 7010]</td>
<td>GIST 8125 / 8126 [p. most]</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIST 7132 [p. 7010]</td>
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ADP students will have completed all courses at the end of Year 2.

B.Tech students must take GIST 8125. B.Tech students must complete more courses. See below:

**Year 3 B.Tech Students**

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<th>Fall</th>
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<tr>
<td>BUSA 7250</td>
<td>LIBS 7002</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIBS 7001</td>
<td>LIBS Elective</td>
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LIBS courses have a prerequisite equal to the equivalent of three credits of university/college composition. B.Tech. Degree Students will have completed all required courses after YEAR 3 but must also complete six months of relevant GIS work experience (after completing all technical GIS courses).

Can I get exemption credit for part-time courses if I take the full-time program later on?
Yes, if you have recently successfully completed the course with a good mark and the course is part of the program.

Can I get credit for part-time course tuition fees if I take the full-time program later on?

No.

Which courses should part-time students do first?

Generally you should start with GIST courses numbered at the 7 thousand level. You need to complete most 7 thousand level courses before the 8 thousand level courses. Most students start with GIST 7100 "Fundamentals of GIS" to get the GIS theory, GIST 7128 "ArcGIS 1" to get some hands-on GIS software, and GIST 7010 "GIS Programming 1" to start practicing coding which is used in many other courses. You are responsible for planning a course schedule and registering for courses. When reviewing course descriptions, pay special attention to the prerequisites. Refer to the 'Suggested Schedules' on this page. Consult with the GIS part-time studies coordinator for additional advice.

Is there a limit on how many courses a part-time student can take in a semester?

No - but a limit of two is suggested for those students who are working full-time.

Do I need to have my own computer?

Yes. Windows, Android, or Mac and with Internet access. A desktop or laptop computer is required. A tablet or smart phone is not sufficient. Our GIS program software runs in a Windows environment through a CITRIX interface, so the student needs to know how to work in a Windows environment, preferably Windows 10.

Are all courses in the program offered through part-time studies?

Yes. However, not all courses will be offered every term.

How do I register for an 8000 level course through part-time studies?

All 8000 level courses, excluding 8118, requires permission from the department. To get permission, email your request to register for the course to gis@bcit.ca.

How do I take courses which are offered during the day at the Burnaby Campus?

Obtain a course by course registration form from Student Records. Complete it and submit it to the Program Assistant. At the beginning of the semester, your form will be processed and you will be placed in a class, space permitting.
Can part-time students switch to the full-time program?

Yes – please email Admissions@bcit.ca [domestic students] or International_Admissions@bcit.ca [international students] to request to switch from part-time to full-time with an application fee waiver. Remember to email early as the full-time programs are often filled early in the year. You will be placed on a wait list if the program is full and you might have to wait another year. Courses you completed as a part-time student will count as credits towards the equivalent full-time course. Tuition is not credited.

How do I write my GIS online final exams?

BCIT Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Online/Distance Learners require a special exam arrangement. All GIS exams are online exams and must be written at an approved examination centre. It is your responsibility to arrange for exam invigilation. You are also responsible for any associated costs.

List of approved Examination Centres:

- BCIT Test Centre
- Canadian Invigilation Network (CIN) Examination Centre
- National College Testing Association (NCTA) Certified Center

Information for the Exam Centre:

The Exam Centre is responsible for receiving the exam and instructions, presiding over the exam according to the instructions, informing the instructor of any unusual happenings and returning all documentation back to the Program Assistant after the student has completed the exam.

If I am at another University and I wish to take a GIS course via the Western Deans’ Agreement through Part-Time Studies, how does that work?

If you pre-register in a part-time studies course in GIS you forfeit the use of the fee waiver under the Western Deans’ Agreement. You can only apply for part-time studies courses that are offered in person, on campus.

Once you fill out the WDA application and send it to BCIT our department holds your application and:

- WDA Students are provisional registrants until there are empty seats in the course.
- Registration will not be processed until two (2) business days prior to course start date.
- WDA Students do not count toward the minimum number of students required to ensure that the course runs.