

MTSA | GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

2025-2026



MASTER OF TRANSPORTATION
SAFETY ADMINISTRATION



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GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

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General Information

This student handbook has been prepared as a guide for graduate students in the Clemson University Master of Transportation Safety Administration (MTSA) program and includes regulations, procedures, and pertinent information on the degree program. All graduate students should also review the Clemson University policies concerning sexual and racial harassment, fair treatment and nondiscrimination of the handicapped, and research ethics. Students should become familiar with the information presented in this document as well as the [Clemson University Graduate Policies & Procedures Academic Year](#).

The policies and procedures of the Graduate School have been established to ensure that a consistent set of standards are followed from the admissions process all the way through to the awarding of degrees for every Graduate School program. It is very important that each student familiarize himself or herself with all Graduate School and departmental requirements and information pertaining to the student's program of study. Should there be discrepancies between the information presented in these two documents, the [Clemson University Graduate Policies & Procedures](#) prevails over this and other departmental student handbooks.

Please also refer to the following documents found on the Clemson University Graduate School website:

[Graduate School Forms](#)
[Graduate School Deadlines](#)

Overview of the Program

Road safety is emerging as a distinct scientific discipline and preparation of professionals for road safety management is vital to our road safety future. Clemson University is leading the way with an innovative, one-of-a-kind experience to professionals and students throughout the country and throughout the world. Launched in 2019, the new Master of Transportation Safety Administration (MTSA) program at Clemson University is the first of its kind in the United States.

Through MTSA, Clemson University's goal is to create a pipeline of leaders equipped with the knowledge and skills required to play critical roles in the creation and management of high-quality, innovative road safety programs. Graduates will be transformed into lifesavers and changemakers helping to save lives and build safer communities throughout the world.

The Need: Demand estimates by the Transportation Research Board (TRB) indicate that as many as 100,000 professionals in the United States alone who contribute to the road

safety workforce need safety-related knowledge and training (TRB Special Report 289: Building the Road Safety Profession in the Public Sector). A much larger demand for this graduate degree program can be anticipated by widening the reach to include an international audience or a different emphasis (e.g., commercial motor vehicle, public transit, or railroad).

Addressing the Need Through Innovation: Clemson's MTSA degree program addresses the need for a road safety workforce capable of deploying evidence-based strategies and best practices supported by ongoing research. This workforce is expected to graduate with an ability to address the complex transportation safety issues that our society will face in the next 10-20 years from a variety of perspectives. This unique graduate degree program is a two-year, non-thesis, 30-credit hour, online interdisciplinary transportation safety curriculum designed to develop professionals skilled in administering and managing road safety programs involving the complex interactions of the human-vehicle-road system.

MTSA has been developed in coordination with a [Technical Advisory Committee](#) (TAC) of prominent national leaders with tremendous expertise in the field of road safety. TAC members bring the latest industry perspectives to the program and will be offering periodic guest lectures. They represent national and international leadership in behavioral safety programs; infrastructure programs; injury prevention; driver and vehicle services; commercial motor vehicle safety; and private industry. Furthermore, MTSA involves faculty from eight Clemson colleges due to the highly interdisciplinary nature of the transportation safety administration field. These faculty represent disciplines that must work collaboratively to reduce traffic crashes, injuries and fatalities.

The curriculum incorporates all the E's of road safety, including behavioral safety, infrastructure/traffic safety engineering, enforcement, emergency management, education, planning and design, health, injury prevention, communications, marketing, public policy, driver and vehicle services, and finance/grants management. It engages students in activities related to current national and international issues and best practices in road safety and aligns with the core competencies identified in *National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Research Results Digest 302*.

The practice of road safety management and administration is increasingly becoming both interdisciplinary and team oriented. Silo disciplines are no longer capable of meeting the challenges of road safety management and administration alone. Teamwork, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking are necessary elements for success in road safety management and administration. The MTSA curriculum, therefore, places emphasis on learning experiences in which students work together in diverse teams of transportation professionals through active discussions, engagement and participation in the learning process, and creative projects to enhance their learning.

The MTSA program encourages candidates from numerous professional backgrounds to apply. For instance, MTSA students represent education, enforcement, emergency management, education, planning and design, public health, injury prevention, communications and marketing, public policy, driver and vehicle services, and transportation finance and grants administration. MTSA addresses the needs of employees of state highway safety offices; the private sector; advocacy groups; safety-related nonprofits and professional associations; and government agencies focused on road safety at local, state, regional, federal and international levels.

Program Points of Contact

Dr. Kim E. Alexander, Clinical Associate Professor, kalxndr@clemson.edu

Terecia Wilson, Professor of Practice, tereciw@clemson.edu

Michael R. Posey, Marketing & Engagement Strategist, mposey@clemson.edu

Support Services

At the beginning of each semester the MTSA program will offer new student technology training workshops and advising sessions. All new students will receive information on these required trainings sessions. During training/advising new students will be encouraged to formulate a plan of study in preparation for individual advising sessions. MTSA faculty and leadership are available on a continuous basis to answer questions and offer guidance. Formal advising can always be scheduled per individual requests. Open, online advising will also be offered prior and during registration for all students. An example Plan of Study is provided in the Degree Requirements section.

The following is a list of campus resources and services available to graduate students:

- Clemson Computing and Technology (864) 656-3494
- Enrolled Student Services (864) 656-2174
- Graduate Admissions (864) 656-3195
- Graduate School (864) 656-5202
- Registration Services (864) 656-2305
- Student Financial Services (864) 656-5592
- Veteran's Affairs (864) 336-3494
- International Affairs (864) 656-3614

Admission Requirements

The MTSA Program has rolling admissions, and accepts students for the Spring, Summer and Fall semesters. Applications are considered year-round for all semesters. The application package must include each of the items listed below no later than 45 days prior to the start of the term you wish to enter.

The Clemson MTSA program is designed and dedicated to serving working professionals. Therefore, the MTSA admissions committee considers four primary pieces of a student's MTSA application. First, we consider an applicant's professional experience, as discussed in their personal statement and GRE waiver (where relevant). Second, grades and courses taken at the undergraduate and/or graduate level are evaluated. Third, letters of reference are extremely important in evaluating the academic and professional experience of the student. Finally, GRE test scores are waived for applicants who can demonstrate 2 or more years of employment in a transportation safety setting (demonstrated from one reference from your current employer).

All students applying to the MTSA program must have an undergraduate degree from an accredited college or university upon entry into the program. Any applicant who is concerned about varying from normal expectations is encouraged to discuss options with the MTSA staff as soon as possible. All applicants will be officially notified of admission decisions by the Graduate School at Clemson University.

All applications to the MTSA are made online, using this [link to the Graduate School Application](#). Each applicant is required to submit the following materials as part of the online application:

- Transcripts showing a bachelor's degree from a nationally accredited college or university (initially, informal transcripts or copies of originals may be utilized).
- A Statement of Purpose.
- A current CV.
- Three Professional references.
- GRE test scores are waived for all applicants.
- Students from countries where English is not the native language must provide IELTS scores.

Degree Requirements

It is possible for students to complete the MTSA degree within two years (4 semesters, 2 summers), but students can spread course work over a longer period as their professional obligations dictate. The MTSA courses include four 3-credit core courses, and six additional 3-credit courses which are chosen to form a thematic cluster customized to fill the needs of individual students. Core courses:

- MTSA 8000 Introduction to Road Safety
- CE 8150 Transportation Safety Engineering
- MTSA 8420 Road Safety Culture
- MTSA 8300 Road Safety Management

The remaining thematic courses listed below are currently being offered for completing this degree program:

- MTSA 8880 Human Factors in Traffic Safety
- COMM 8210 Trends in Public Relations Theory & Research
- ME 6930 Fundamentals of Vehicle & Driver Safety
- PADM 8220 Public Policy Process
- MTSA 8880 Enforcement Strategies
- MTSA 8990 Internship in Road Safety Management

Apply Online

All applications to the MTSA are made online, using the link <https://www.clemson.edu/graduate/admissions/apply/index.html>.

For more information, contact Dr. Kim E. Alexander, Executive Director, Clemson University's Institute for Global Road Safety and Security (IGRSS) at MTSAAppl@clemson.edu.

Email

Upon acceptance to Clemson University, you will receive information about your user ID and password from the Graduate School. Email is the most common mode used by the department and the university to communicate with you. Please check your e-mail regularly.

Online Conduct

Appropriate online academic conduct means maintaining a safe learning environment based on mutual respect and civility. Remember that in an online class it is common for a very substantial portion of your grade to be a function of how well you perform in online discussion areas and other "classroom participation" activities. Your ability to communicate clearly and properly in an online class can be every bit as important to your success as how you perform on multiple choice tests and written assignments.

Watch these short videos:

- [Make the Most of Your Virtual Communications,](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lh1fi2dOhbl)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lh1fi2dOhbl>
- [Internet Etiquette: Netiquette Guidelines for the Online Classroom](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6Sh6Hdsf0I&t=82s)
- [Netiquette for Online Classes,](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6Sh6Hdsf0I&t=82s)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6Sh6Hdsf0I&t=82s>

All participants in Clemson courses are expected to behave professionally by adhering to these standards of conduct:

- Be present during the videoconferencing with camera and microphone active and in suitable business attire.
- Be courteous and respectful of the instructors and fellow classmates (e.g., show an attentive, alert, business-like presence on camera).
- Never transmit or promote content known to be illegal.
- Respect the privacy of others as well as your own.
- Forgive other people's mistakes.
- Never use harassing, threatening, embarrassing, or abusive language or actions.

In general, there are two basic guidelines:

- Don't waste people's time.
- Don't say anything to a person online that you wouldn't say to face-to-face.

More specific guidelines for proper behavior in an online learning course are listed below.

- Avoid Flaming - using derogatory, obscene, or inappropriate language. This can either be on a discussion board or in e-mail.
- Don't SHOUT. Use of all capital letters and exclamation marks indicates SHOUTING.
- Avoid grammatical and spelling errors by using Spelling and Grammar checker tools when they are available.
- Do a quick check of the discussion board or course site before posting or e-mailing questions to see if the question you are about to ask or the article you just read and were about to post has already been posted.
- Keep your posts on-topic and on the proper board. Keeping messages on topic will help with the organization and readability.
- Share expert knowledge. Post resources on how you found information.
- Avoid sending large attachments through e-mail unless someone has specifically asked for it.
- When replying to an e-mail message, don't "Reply to All" unless it's necessary. Also, only attach the portion of the original e-mail that you are responding to. Do not attach the entire message when it's not necessary.

Online communication that fails to meet these standards of conduct will be removed from the course. Repeated misconduct may result in being blocked from online discussions, receiving a grade penalty, or being dismissed from the course. Such misconduct in the online environment may also be reported to officials for appropriate

action in accordance with University policy. If you ever encounter inappropriate content in our course, please contact me with your concerns.

Counseling Services

The demands of graduate school can sometimes seem overwhelming. If you feel you could benefit from talking to a counselor – about grad school stress or any other issue – you may be eligible to receive services from the Counseling and Psychological Services Program (CAPS), located in Redfern Health Center. To learn about their current programs, visit the [CAPS website](#) or call them at (864) 656-2451.

Ombuds for Faculty and Graduate Students

An ombuds is an independent, informal, neutral and confidential resource who provides assistance to members of the University community in exploring options to resolve problems, complaints and conflicts when normal processes and procedures have not worked satisfactorily. This assistance is an alternate to formal administrative channels, supplementing them but not replacing them. The Ombuds Office serves as a resource for those who seek guidance on policies, procedures and regulations affecting faculty, graduate students, postdocs, undergraduate students and staff. Ombuds can refer individuals to persons able to resolve problems or handle issues at the lowest possible level. Where appropriate, ombuds can also facilitate communication between parties who find themselves in a dispute.

What Is the Ombuds' Role?

Ombuds strive to foster equitable treatment of all faculty, graduate students, postdocs, undergraduate students and staff within the University system. Ombuds provide an independent, neutral point of view in an informal and confidential environment. All ombuds at Clemson adhere to the [Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice](#) of the International Ombuds Association, as explained below. We are not part of any administrative structure at Clemson and refrain from making policy, administrative decisions or conducting formal investigations.

What Services does the Ombuds provide?

The Office of the Ombudsman provides fair and impartial counseling to faculty members, graduate students and post docs. Private confidential meetings can be arranged at your convenience. All communications will be treated with strict confidentiality to the extent permissible by law. The Ombuds will not identify you or discuss your personal concerns with anyone unless, within the course of your conversations with the Ombuds, you and the Ombuds both deem it appropriate to do so. The only exception to confidentiality to the extent permissible by law, is when an Ombuds determines that there is risk of imminent harm. Matters discussed with an ombuds are considered confidential, "off the record," and do not constitute formal notice of any claims to Clemson University. The Ombuds Office is made available to

visitors with the express understanding that it provides them with a confidential, independent, neutral and alternate channel of communication. Use of the Ombuds Office constitutes an agreement not to seek to compel an ombuds to reveal confidential communications in formal or legal proceedings.

Code of Ethics

Ombuds at Clemson University follow the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the International Ombuds Association, as stated below:

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Independence

The Ombuds is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.

Neutrality and Impartiality

The Ombuds, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The Ombuds does not engage in any situation which could create a conflict of interest.

Confidentiality

The Ombuds holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm.

Informality

The Ombuds, as an informal resource, does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention.

Standards of Practice

Independence

1.1 The Ombuds Office and the Ombuds are independent from other organizational entities.

1.2 The Ombuds holds no other position within the organization which might compromise independence.

1.3 The Ombuds exercises sole discretion over whether or how to act regarding an individual's concern, a trend or concerns of multiple individuals over time. The Ombuds may also initiate action on a concern identified through the Ombuds' direct observation.

1.4 The Ombuds has access to all information and all individuals in the organization, as permitted by law.

1.5 The Ombuds has authority to select Ombuds Office staff and manage Ombuds Office budget and operations.

Neutrality and Impartiality

2.1 The Ombuds is neutral, impartial, and unaligned.

2.2 The Ombuds strives for impartiality, fairness and objectivity in the treatment of people and the consideration of issues. The Ombuds advocates for fair and equitably administered processes and does not advocate on behalf of any individual within the organization.

2.3 The Ombuds is a designated neutral reporting to the highest possible level of the organization and operating independent of ordinary line and staff structures. The Ombuds should not report to nor be structurally affiliated with any compliance function of the organization.

2.4 The Ombuds serves in no additional role within the organization which would compromise the Ombuds' neutrality. The Ombuds should not be aligned with any formal or informal associations within the organization in a way that might create actual or perceived conflicts of interest for the Ombuds. The Ombuds should have no personal interest or stake in, and incur no gain or loss from, the outcome of an issue.

2.5 The Ombuds has a responsibility to consider the legitimate concerns and interests of all individuals affected by the matter under consideration.

2.6 The Ombuds helps develop a range of responsible options to resolve problems and facilitate discussion to identify the best options.

Confidentiality

3.1 The Ombuds holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and takes all reasonable steps to safeguard confidentiality, including the following:

The Ombuds does not reveal, and must not be required to reveal, the identity of any individual contacting the Ombuds Office, nor does the Ombuds reveal information provided in confidence that could lead to the identification of any individual contacting the Ombuds Office, without that individual's express permission, given in the course of informal discussions with the Ombuds; the Ombuds takes specific action related to an individual's issue only with the individual's express permission and only to the extent permitted, and even then at the sole discretion of the Ombuds, unless such action can be taken in a way that safeguards the identity of the individual contacting the Ombuds Office. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, and where there is no other reasonable option. Whether this risk exists is a determination to be made by the Ombuds.

3.2 Communications between the Ombuds and others (made while the Ombuds is serving in that capacity) are considered privileged. The privilege belongs to the Ombuds and the Ombuds Office, rather than to any party to an issue. Others cannot waive this privilege.

3.3 The Ombuds does not testify in any formal process inside the organization and resists testifying in any formal process outside of the organization regarding a visitor's contact with the Ombuds or confidential information communicated to the Ombuds, even if given permission or requested to do so. The Ombuds may,

however, provide general, non-confidential information about the Ombuds Office or the Ombuds profession.

3.4 If the Ombuds pursues an issue systemically (e.g., provides feedback on trends, issues, policies and practices) the Ombuds does so in a way that safeguards the identity of individuals.

3.5 The Ombuds keeps no records containing identifying information on behalf of the organization.

3.6 The Ombuds maintains information (e.g., notes, phone messages, appointment calendars) in a secure location and manner, protected from inspection by others (including management), and has a consistent and standard practice for the destruction of such information.

3.7 The Ombuds prepares any data and/or reports in a manner that protects confidentiality.

3.8 Communications made to the Ombuds are not notice to the organization. The Ombuds neither acts as agent for, nor accepts notice on behalf of, the organization. However, the Ombuds may refer individuals to the appropriate place where formal notice can be made.

Informality and Other Standards

4.1 The Ombuds functions on an informal basis by such means as: listening, providing and receiving information, identifying and reframing issues, developing a range of responsible options, and—with permission and at Ombuds discretion—engaging in informal third-party intervention. When possible, the Ombuds helps people develop new ways to solve problems themselves.

4.2 The Ombuds as an informal and off-the-record resource pursues resolution of concerns and looks into procedural irregularities and/or broader systemic problems when appropriate.

4.3 The Ombuds does not make binding decisions, mandate policies, or formally adjudicate issues for the organization.

4.4 The Ombuds supplements, but does not replace, any formal channels. Use of the Ombuds Office is voluntary and is not a required step in any grievance process or organizational policy.

4.5 The Ombuds does not participate in any formal investigative or adjudicative procedures. Formal investigations should be conducted by others. When a formal investigation is requested, the Ombuds refers individuals to the appropriate offices or individual.

4.6 The Ombuds identifies trends, issues and concerns about policies and procedures, including potential future issues and concerns, without breaching confidentiality or anonymity, and provides recommendations for responsibly addressing them.

4.7 The Ombuds acts in accordance with the IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, keeps professionally current by pursuing continuing education, and provides opportunities for staff to pursue professional training.

4.8 The Ombuds endeavors to be worthy of the trust placed in the Ombuds Office.

Assistance for Students and Staff

Graduate Students: Any complaint should first be taken to the faculty or staff member involved to reach a resolution. If no resolution is reached, the graduate student should consult with the department chair and the Dean of the Graduate School who will hear the complaint and act as a referee. The ombuds, student, the Dean, the department chair, and the involved faculty or staff member should make every effort to reach a solution. If a resolution cannot be made, the student should then consult with the Dean of the Graduate School. Graduate students should talk with the associate dean responsible for academic grievances if mediation is necessary. The Graduate School is located in E-106 Martin Hall, and the telephone number is (864) 656-4172.

How Can Ombuds be contacted?

Concerns can be directed to the appropriate University ombuds by letter, walk-in, appointment (appointments are not necessary but are encouraged) or telephone. Please be mindful that email is not a confidential method of communication.

R. Gordon Halfacre*, Ph.D., MLA
University ombuds for Faculty and Students
Phone: 864-656-4353
Email: rhlfcr@clemson.edu
Tessa Byer*, MCP, MA
University Ombuds for Staff
Phone: 864-656-5353
Email: tbyer@clemson.edu

201 West Cherry Road
Seneca, SC 29678
Fax: 864-656-4373

Non-Discrimination

Clemson University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, veteran's status, genetic information or protected activity (e.g., opposition to prohibited discrimination or participation in any complaint process, etc.) in employment, educational programs and activities, admissions and financial aid. This includes a prohibition against sexual harassment and sexual violence as mandated by [Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972](#). Please refer to the [Notice of Non-Discrimination](#) policy. Alesia Smith serves as Clemson's Title IX Coordinator and may be reached at alesias@clemson.edu or (864) 656-3181.

Student Accessibility Services

Clemson University values the diversity of our student body as a strength and a critical component of our dynamic community. Students with disabilities or temporary injuries/conditions may require accommodations due to barriers in the structure of facilities, course design, technology used for curricular purposes, or other campus resources. Students who experience a barrier to full access to this class should let the professor know and make an appointment to meet with a staff member in Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible. You can make an appointment by calling 864-656-6848, by emailing studentaccess@lists.clemson.edu, or by visiting Suite 239 in the Academic Success Center building. Appointments are strongly encouraged – drop-ins will be seen, if at all possible, but there could be a significant wait due to scheduled appointments. Students who receive Academic Access Letters are strongly encouraged to request, obtain and present these to their professors as early in the semester as possible so that accommodations can be made in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to follow this process each semester. You can access further policies and procedures at www.clemson.edu/academics/studentaccess/.

Academic Support Services

Students may access a variety of academic support services to enhance your learning in the online classroom. Here are links to services available:

- [Academic Success Center](#)
- [The Writing Center](#)
- [Clemson Library](#)
- [CCIT \(Tech Support\)](#)
- [CCIT \(Tech Support\) email: \[ithelp@clemson.edu\]\(mailto:ithelp@clemson.edu\)](#)
- [Academic Advising](#)
- [Registrar](#)

Emergency Contact

University email is considered an official communication. Students are required to monitor their university email (see [Email Communications Policy](#)) thus establishing this as a convenient method for official communication to students.