



# PhD Program in Health

## Overview of Comprehensive Examination and Dissertation

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## Doctoral Degree - Minimum Requirements and Regulations

### Doctoral Degree-Level Expectations

Included below are degree level expectations for doctoral programs offered at York University. The structure and requirements of doctoral programs are intended to support the achievement of degree-level expectations and program-specific learning outcomes.

	<p><b>Doctoral degree</b> This degree extends the skills associated with the Master's degree and is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following:</p>
<b>1. Depth and breadth of knowledge</b>	A thorough understanding of a substantial body of knowledge that is at the forefront of their academic discipline or area of professional practice including, where appropriate, relevant knowledge outside the field and/or discipline.
<b>2. Research and scholarship</b>	<p>a) The ability to conceptualize, design, and implement research for the generation of new knowledge, applications, or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the research design or methodology in the light of unforeseen problems;</p> <p>b) The ability to make informed judgments on complex issues in specialist fields, sometimes requiring new methods; and</p> <p>c) The ability to produce original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, and to merit publication.</p>
<b>3. Level of application of knowledge</b>	<p>The capacity to</p> <p>a) Undertake pure and/or applied research at an advanced level; and</p> <p>b) Contribute to the development of academic or professional skills, techniques, tools, practices, ideas, theories, approaches, and/or materials.</p>
<b>4. Professional capacity/autonomy</b>	<p>a) The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex situations;</p> <p>b) The intellectual independence to be academically and professionally engaged and current;</p> <p>c) The ethical behavior consistent with academic integrity and the use of appropriate guidelines and procedures for responsible conduct of research; and</p> <p>d) The ability to evaluate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.</p>
<b>5. Level of communications skills</b>	The ability to communicate complex and/or ambiguous ideas, issues and conclusions clearly and effectively.
<b>6. Awareness of limits of knowledge</b>	An appreciation of the limitations of one's own work and discipline, of the complexity of knowledge, and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines.

## **Program Structure**

A candidate for a doctoral degree shall pursue at York University, under the direction of a Graduate Program, an advanced course of study and research approved by the Graduate Program Director (GPD) of the sponsoring program.

All doctoral programs require the submission of a dissertation proposal, including appropriate ethics review and approval; a dissertation embodying the results of original research, and; successful defense of this dissertation at an oral examination. In addition to the submission of a dissertation and oral examination, individual Graduate Program may have additional requirements, such as coursework, comprehensive examinations, practicum, fieldwork, language requirements, etc.

## **Program Length and Minimum Period of Registration**

All doctoral programs are structured in terms, which is a four-month period. Doctoral students must register and pay fees for a minimum of the equivalent of six terms of full-time registration.

**The PhD program in Health** is normally a **4-year full-time** program of advanced graduate study. Students are required to maintain continuous registration upon admission as well as throughout the course of study at the same status since it is the basis of admission and enrollment planning.

## **Time Limits**

All requirements for a doctoral degree must be fulfilled **within 18 terms (6 years) of registration as a full-time or part-time doctoral student** in accordance with [Faculty of Graduate Studies Registration Policies](#), including the requirement of continuous registration. Terms that students register as Leave of Absence, Maternal Leave, Parental Leave, or No Course Available are not included in these time limits.

## **Annual Progress Reports**

In accordance with the requirements and procedures of a Graduate Program, students in doctoral programs must submit a Progress Report to the GPD on an annual basis, normally in early June. Once established, a dissertation supervisory committee shall meet with the student, at least annually to evaluate the Report on Progress. This completed report is submitted by the student to the GPD after the meeting. **Reports to the GPD of unsatisfactory progress may require a student to withdraw from the Graduate Program in which the student is enrolled.**

PhD students in Health are required to submit an [Annual Progress Report](#) to the GPD (electronically) and to the Graduate Program Office physically (Room 409 HNES Building) **by May 31<sup>st</sup> of each year** (or the following business day if May 31<sup>st</sup> falls on a public holiday).

### **Coursework**

In addition to those courses specified individually by the Graduate Program, students with permission of the GPD, may elect to enroll in additional courses.

A minimum of two-thirds of the course requirements for a doctoral program should be completed from graduate-level courses.

Graduate students may not take or receive credit for an integrated course at the graduate level if they took it at York or elsewhere at the undergraduate level.

### **Language and Cognate Requirements**

Requirements with respect to language facility (other than language required for admission), technical skill (*e.g.*, statistics or computer techniques), and/or cognate subjects are determined by individual Graduate Programs with the approval of the Faculty of Graduate Studies' Council.

### **Comprehensive Examinations**

Individual Graduate Programs may require students to undertake comprehensive examinations. The specific requirements and evaluation procedures are determined by individual Graduate Programs, with the approval of the Faculty of Graduate Studies' Council.

### **Language of Dissertations**

**A dissertation should be written in English**, but approval may be given to a written request from a student for a dissertation to be written in French or in the language of any Aboriginal/First Nations people in North America, subject to confirmation from the GPD of the Graduate Program concerned that relevant supervision and sufficient support for the completion of such written work can be provided.

### **Formatting**

12-point font Times Roman

Double spaced

Left aligned

Margins: 1.5" Top, 1.5" left side, 1" bottom, 1" right side

## Graduate Supervision and Supervisor Responsibilities

Graduate supervision is an important part of training scholars. Positive, respectful, professional, and productive working relationships are paramount to the success of graduate students and their advisors/supervisors. Arrange a consultation meeting with your supervisor to outline the parameters of your graduate supervision. **It is recommended that students use the draft graduate supervision checklist to establish expectations and responsibilities with their graduate supervisor before supervision begins.** Both students and supervisors are to familiarize themselves with the draft policy on Graduate Supervision, as well.

### Guidelines for Supervisors

The supervisor's principal task consists in helping students realize their scholarly potential. This can only be accomplished in a relationship that offers insights born of experience, and furnishes the requisite challenges, stimulation, guidance and genuine support. The student has a right to expect from the supervisor expertise, accessibility and support. The supervisor must offer substantive and procedural assistance with the design, planning and conduct of feasible research projects, introduction to the network of scholars in the area of specialization, and support for the presentation and publication of the research results. At the same time the supervisor must ensure that the scholarly standards of the university and the discipline are met in the student's work.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to:

- 1) Be reasonably accessible to the student for consultation and discussion of the student's academic progress and research problems. The frequency of such meetings will vary according to the discipline involved and the stage and nature of the student's work, but should normally occur at once a month, and never less than once each term.
- 2) Give timely response to submitted written work, with constructive and concrete suggestions for improvements. This normally means within 3 weeks or as agreed upon between supervisor and student.
- 3) Make satisfactory arrangements in advance with the approval of the Graduate Program Director for the supervision of the student when on leave or sabbatical, or on extended absence from the university.
- 4) Convene an annual meeting of the supervisory committee, normally in the spring, to evaluate the student's Report on Progress, and submit a copy of the completed Report to the Graduate Program Director after the meeting. Apart from highlighting the student's academic progress thus far, the Progress Report should also clearly identify the challenges, if any, facing the student, including considerations for students with disability.
- 5) In conjunction with the Graduate Program Office, ensure the student is aware of University, Faculty and program requirements and standards to which the thesis/dissertation is expected to conform.
- 6) Assist the student with attempts to acquire external funding, including meeting appropriate deadlines, and to engage in scholarly development (e.g., conference presentations and publications).
- 7) Offer supervision and advice appropriate to the stage of the student's work, helping the student to establish and modify a suitable timetable for completion of the various stages of the thesis/dissertation project:
  - o at the proposal stage, assist the student with selection of a suitable and manageable topic and approach;
  - o at the research stage, assist the student with initial research design and subsequent modification, with alleviating current and anticipated problems, with interpretation and analysis of findings, and with bringing the project to completion;

- at the writing stage, assist the student with appropriate and timely feedback on individual draft chapters, and with revision to the draft thesis/dissertation as an integrated whole;
  - at the oral defence stage, advise the student on preparation for the examination and assist the student to interpret and comply with any changes recommended by the examining committee.
- 8) When the final draft of the thesis or dissertation is complete, ensure that all members of the committee have read the document and are agreed that it is ready to proceed to an oral defence. Suggest possible members of the examining committee to the Graduate Program Director (i.e., outside examiner, external examiner). Ensure that a master's thesis is sent to the examining committee at least 15 business days prior to the date of the examination, and a doctoral dissertation at least 20 business days prior to the date of the examination.
  - 9) Appropriately acknowledge in published material the contributions of the student, including consideration of joint authorship of publications. Where the student's research comprises a component of the supervisor's research program, and joint publication is envisaged, it must be recognized that the responsibility for utilization of data and for publications is held jointly by the supervisor and student. Endeavour to clarify at the outset of the supervisory relationship expectations regarding the responsibility and publication credit for work initiated, designed and researched by the student, but supported financially or otherwise by the supervisor.
  - 10) Conform to basic principles of academic integrity and professionalism in the development of a mature and objective relationship with the student. It must be recognized that there is a power imbalance in the supervisory relationship and that any form of harassment or exploitation of students is unacceptable.
  - 11) Conform to the graduate program and Faculty processes in the event of a supervisory relationship which is unsatisfactory for any reason or in situations where there is a change of supervisors for any reason.
  - 12) Even though "each student has final responsibility for her or his academic honesty" (Senate Policy on Academic Honesty), it is incumbent on the supervisor to ensure, to the extent that it is practicable in the circumstances, the academic integrity of primary research data, and the consistency with academic integrity and practice of interpretations relating to such data.

### **Guidelines for Students receiving supervision:**

By entering into a Graduate Program, the student has made a commitment to devote the time and energy necessary to engage in research and write a thesis/dissertation which constitutes a substantial and original contribution to knowledge in a field. The supervisor has a right to expect from the student ability, initiative and receptivity. It is the responsibility of the student to:

- 1) Conform to University, Faculty and Program requirements and procedures for completion of the graduate degree, with regard to such matters as research ethics, registration and graduation requirements, thesis/dissertation style and quality standards etc.
- 2) Develop, in conjunction with the supervisor and supervisory committee, an intended timetable for completion of all stages of the thesis/dissertation, and work to realize that timetable, meeting appropriate deadlines.
- 3) Meet regularly with the supervisor to review progress. The frequency of such meetings will vary according to the discipline involved and the stage and nature of the student's work but should normally occur at least once a month and not less than once each term. Interact with other members of the supervisory committee as appropriate.
- 4) Keep the supervisor and Graduate Program office informed of where the student may be contacted and respond appropriately to all communications received.
- 5) Prepare a Progress Report for an annual meeting with the supervisory committee.

- 6) Give serious consideration to and respond to the advice and criticism received from the supervisor and the supervisory committee.
- 7) Recognize that the supervisor and other members of the supervisory committee may have other teaching, research and service obligations which may preclude immediate responses.
- 8) Recognize that where the student's research comprises a component of the supervisor's research program, and joint publication is envisaged, the responsibility for utilization of data and for publications is held jointly by the supervisor and student. In such cases, the thesis/dissertation, or draft papers, together with a copy of the raw data, shall be made available to the supervisor prior to submission for publication.
- 9) Conform to basic principles of academic integrity and professionalism in the development of a mature and objective relationship with the supervisor, the supervisory committee, and other scholars. The entire training in a Graduate Program, including research and writing of the thesis/dissertation, shall be conducted under the strictest rules of ethics and academic honesty.
- 10) As stated in the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty, "A lack of familiarity with the Senate Policy and Guidelines on Academic Honesty on the part of a student does not constitute a defence against their application." With that in mind, it is incumbent on each student to ensure the academic integrity of his or her primary research, and of the interpretations relating to such research

To access the Faculty of Graduate Studies supervision checklist and graduate supervision policy visit: <http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/grad-working-group-supervision-feedback/>

### **Role of the Graduate Program Office**

The role of the Graduate Program Office (GPO) in supporting graduate student supervision is a very important one. The GPO is responsible for setting program expectations, ensuring that graduate students have a clear sense of what is expected of them to successfully fulfill their degree requirements in a timely manner. This includes setting up an explicit timeline including all project milestones.

It is the role of the GPO to keep the student informed, on track, to direct the student to relevant offices and procedures as they progress through their degree, and to participate in the resolution of any supervisor-student conflicts. Students are welcomed to discuss scenarios with the Graduate Program Assistant.

### **Conflict Resolution Policy**

Conflicts should be resolved as close to the source as possible. Students and Supervisors are encouraged to address any issues promptly and informally with the Graduate Program Director. Consult with the Faculty of Graduate Studies policy on [conflict resolution](#).

## Guidelines on Comprehensive Examinations

In the Health Graduate Program, it is expected that students complete **two 25-page (double-spaced) comprehensive papers** during the 2nd year of study, after the completion of all course work, and subsequently take an oral Comprehensive Examination usually by the beginning of the 3rd year of study.

The comprehensive examination is a pedagogical exercise that requires candidates, upon completion of course work requirements, to engage in written and oral focused academic inquiry on a topic or problem of interest. The comprehensive examination offers students the opportunity to engage in academic inquiry that extends the bounds of coursework and moves toward the conceptual work of the dissertation.

The combination of the written and oral work tests the students' grasp of the history of the field, its central themes and debates, and the key theoretical, contextual and methodological issues. It reflects the diversity of perspectives in the field and its interdisciplinary nature. Successful completion of this requirement demonstrates that the student has the level of knowledge in his/her area of specialization needed to begin work on the dissertation.

**Each of the two 25-page comprehensive papers are supervised by a faculty member appointed to the Health Graduate Program.**

- One paper broadly covers the scope of the Health Policy & Equity or Health System Management and Informatics fields. Students are expected to meet with their comprehensive supervisor periodically at a frequency to be decided between the two parties. During the meetings, the student will identify the themes and literatures that capture the key debates pertaining to the field from various perspectives and will develop the reading list in consultation with their supervisor. The literatures to be chosen must be primary sources, as opposed to secondary analysis.
- The other paper covers a broad context-specific area of study related to the dissertation. (The context specific area that is chosen should be wider than a question to be investigated in a thesis.) **An appendix of an additional 5-10 pages must also be submitted.** This appendix should explore the various methodologies that could be used to address research questions in this particular context specific area, examine the debates around these methodologies and then justify the choice of the methodology /methodologies. The process used to determine the chosen topic and literature to be read is similar to those outlined for the 1st assignment as above. **Students are to submit the topic for this assignment to the Graduate Program Office before starting this stage.** (Refer to the following link for the Notification of Comprehensive Paper Supervisors form).

**Students are expected to work in conjunction with their supervisors to produce their own individualized plan and preliminary reading lists for each of the two comprehensive exams.** This enables students to explore and create an initial reading plan based on their understanding of the specific areas of the field of study. Students can include a wide variety of readings, including those that are beyond any one theoretical orientation, to ensure that the diversity of ideas that make up the breadth and depth of the field are learned. Students are expected and required to go beyond the areas with which they are most familiar, to obtain a broad, comprehensive knowledge of the field of Health Policy & Equity.

Readings for comprehensive papers are composed by the student as they survey the literature for each field in accordance with their research interests and focus. The reading



lists are then revised in consultation with each comprehensive paper's supervisor. Reading lists will vary by student and it is rare that two reading lists will be comparable. Your reading lists for each comp can be started early. Maintain a list of books and articles you have read or would like to read, texts that professors and colleagues remark on and in which of the two comp lists they could be included. There will be some overlap across the exams, but it will likely be less than 10% of the texts. When a draft of the lists has been completed you will submit them to each comp supervisor with an outline of the comp paper focus. You should then meet with each committee member to assess whether any he/she has additional recommendations.

### Securing a Comprehensive Supervisory Committee

All faculty appointed in the Health Graduate Program, including Adjunct Faculty and Professor Emeritus, with Full-status appointments at the Faculty of Graduate Studies, are eligible to supervise comprehensive papers.

(**Note:** For doctoral dissertations, any faculty in the Health Graduate Program (upon approval with the Faculty of Graduate Studies) can serve on supervisory and examining committees. However, not all of them are eligible to serve as a Principal Supervisor. Only a professor with Full-status appointment at the Faculty of Graduate Studies is eligible to be a principal supervisor. Refer to the Health Policy & Equity Handbook for a listing of supervisory eligibility.)

**Prior to commencing the work on any comprehensive paper**, students are required to submit following documents to the Health Policy & Equity Graduate Program Office (Room 409, HNES) to obtain approval of the GPD:

- [An outline for each comprehensive paper \(up to 5 pages\) that addresses the background, key questions and/or topics to be examined and the criteria to select a preliminary reading list, which should be submitted with the outline](#)
- [Notification of Comprehensive Paper Supervisors form, signed and dated by both faculty members](#)

The expected timeline for completion of the two comprehensive papers is about 8 months. Students can choose to undertake these assignments in any order. However, it is recommended that students complete these assignments sequentially as opposed to concurrently. PhD students who start their comprehensives (comps) process will have only **two opportunities to make major revisions after receiving feedback** from the comps committee, prior to the qualifying oral exam. If the comps committee deems the revision to be unsuitable, then the student will not go forward to defence of the comps and will be asked to withdraw from the program.

The **oral comprehensive examination** is a closed exam (i.e. not open to public though two guests are allowed on student's request) set at the completion of the two comprehensive papers and is expected to take place by the beginning of the 3rd year of study. The examination committee will include the two faculty members who supervised each paper, as well as the Graduate Program Director (or his/her designate). The oral component consists of a 2-hour examination wherein the examiners will question the student regarding their two papers.

The oral comprehensive examination is assessed using one of the following categories: **pass, pass with conditions, or unsatisfactory.**

- Students who receive a rating of **"pass with conditions"** on the discussion must fulfill all of the conditions satisfactorily within 1 month of the discussion date. Failure

to meet the conditions satisfactorily and promptly will result in expulsion from the program.

- Students who receive a rating of **“unsatisfactory”** on the discussion are permitted to re-sit the discussion once within 3 months of the date of the 1st discussion. A second failure will result in expulsion from the program.
- **Successful** completion of the oral discussion qualifies students to begin their dissertation.

**After the oral examination, the student will submit all final e-copies of the comprehensive papers to the Graduate Program Office, for the program records.**

Please follow the cover page template in Appendix 1. Successful completion of the written papers and the subsequent oral exam qualifies the candidate to begin the dissertation proposal.

## **Dissertation Proposal and Writing – 7 Components**

After successful completion of the oral comprehensive examination, students will begin preparation of the dissertation proposal.

The dissertation process has **seven components** as below. Read the **Faculty of Graduate Studies Doctoral Dissertation Regulations (p. 14-18 below)** before you start.

1. Identify your Principal Supervisor and arrange a detailed consultation meeting to outline the parameters of your graduate supervision of your dissertation. Use the draft graduate supervision checklist to establish expectations and responsibilities. Supervisors are to familiarize themselves with the draft policy on Graduate Supervision, as well.

To access the checklist and graduate supervision policy visit:

<http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/grad-working-group-supervision-feedback/>

2. Establish a **Supervisory Committee** which consists of **three faculty members** – a Principal Supervisor and two supervisory committee members. Please see subsequent page for the composition and approval of a committee. This form is submitted to the Graduate Program Office:

[Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval form](#)

3. Arrange meetings with the Principal Supervisor and the Supervisory Committee as needed, to discuss and refine the dissertation proposal. You will need to work with your supervisory committee at all stages when writing your dissertation proposal. Per the Faculty of Graduate Studies standards, you are expected to prepare a **Dissertation Proposal of 3500 words maximum, not including sources and notes**. The purpose of the proposal is to provide guidance for the successful completion of the dissertation. **It should state succinctly and clearly the following points:**

- a. A brief thesis question and summary of the dissertation topic
- b. Why it is important to Health Policy & Equity
- c. The original contribution your dissertation will make to the field
- d. Methodology, subject to Research Ethics protocols
- e. Sources – for example, human participants, archival sources, secondary sources, arts/media-based material, mixture of above
- f. Preliminary outline of sections for the dissertation document
- g. Time-line
- h. A select reference list of essential sources
- i. Any additional supporting materials can be included as an appendix

Once the proposal is approved by the supervisory committee, each student submits the TD1 form, the final dissertation proposal and any research ethics forms to the Graduate Program Office. Please ensure that your graduate supervisor signs the TD1 and/or TD2 forms. Include the appropriate documents outlined in the TD1 category that relates to your research and methodologies. Finally, the GPD signs/grants approval prior to its submission to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

TD1 form: <http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/files/2014/12/td-1.pdf>

### **Research Ethics forms**

All projects involving the use of human subjects, animals, and biohazardous materials are subject to review by the appropriate University committee. York University has formulated policies and procedures for the conduct of research involving all three of these areas. Failure to obtain ethics approval prior to the commencement of Research Activities is considered both a breach of Senate Policy as well as research misconduct. All such instances of non-compliance will be addressed by the appropriate institutional office.

Please refer to the Faculty of Graduate Studies research ethics guidelines.

- Refer to the [research ethics guidelines](#) to determine the category of your research and the necessary approval forms
- Determine whether the research is minimum risk, conducted as part of a faculty member's research project, involves Aboriginal/Indigenous peoples or more than minimum risk
- Complete the [Thesis/Dissertation Proposal Submission form – TD1 form](#) plus other forms/documents outlined in your category (i.e. [TD2 Research Ethics Protocol form for Dissertations](#))
- Include the [TCPS Ethics tutorial certificate](#), upon completion
- Students are responsible for signing and submitting the entire package to the graduate office

The Graduate Program Office will forward the proposal and ethics package to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for final approval. This will take several weeks for a final decision, that arrives by email.

4. During the **writing of a dissertation**, graduate supervisors must offer substantive and procedural assistance with the design, planning and conduct of feasible research projects, provide introductions to the network of scholars in the specialization, and support for the presentation and publication of the research results. At the same time the supervisor must ensure that the scholarly standards of the university and the discipline are met in the student's work. Timely responses to submitted written work are key, with constructive suggestions for improvements. This normally means within 3 weeks or as agreed upon between supervisor and student.
5. The **scheduling of an oral defense** should start at least 3 months before an intended date of defense. The student must be actively registered in the term that an oral defense occurs. First, the dissertation committee is responsible for notifying the home graduate office (in writing) when the dissertation is defensible and for identifying the Internal and External Examiners. Include a range of dates. The Graduate Program Office schedules the defense. The dissertation committee will recommend the Internal and External Examiners to the Graduate Program office for

approval by the Graduate Program Director and appointment by the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

6. In preparation for the final oral defense, the student is responsible for ensuring that all members of the examining committee (i.e. dissertation committee, Internal Examiner) have **an e-copy** of the dissertation, unless prior approval has been received for the submission of **a paper copy**. The graduate program administrator or the supervisor (not the student), should send the external examiner's copy of the dissertation. It will be accompanied, at the minimum, by generic instructions and notification that the Dean's official letter of invitation will follow. The copy must be received by the external examiner at least 20 business days prior to the exam.

For a **complex electronic dissertation**, the student is responsible for ensuring that all members of the examining committee have not only an e-copy but also paper copy of the components that are difficult to read via the e-copy. (If **paper copies** are submitted for the oral exam, the pagination and formatting of each page of the **paper copies** and the **e-copies** must match.) For the remaining component of the work, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the work produced for the dissertation can be examined by the examining committee. Students producing a multimedia dissertation should consult with the Theses Canada Portal on the Library and Archives Canada website for advice on formats supportable for preservation.

7. The **oral defence occurs at York University**. The oral defense centered on the dissertation and matters related to it, are presided over by an Examining Committee. Notification will arrive via email to the candidate and the committee members, from the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Refer to page 11 -13 on for the responsibilities of the examining committee and how an oral examination occurs.

### Composition of Dissertation Supervisory Committee

A dissertation supervisory committee consists of **three faculty** – a **Principal Supervisor** and **two supervisory committee members**.

- The **Principal Supervisor** must be a **Full Member** of the Health Graduate Program where the student is enrolled. (**Exceptions** are:
  1. An Associate Member of the Health Graduate Program may serve as a Co-Supervisor on the condition that the other Co-Supervisor is a Full Member of the Health Graduate Program.
  2. In exceptional circumstances, Members Emeriti may be eligible to act as Principal Supervisor of doctoral dissertations, on the condition that another member of the supervisory committee would be willing and able to act as Principal Supervisor should the need arise, and subject to the approval of the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.)
- The **1<sup>st</sup> supervisory committee member** must be appointed to the Health Graduate Program. All faculty in the Program are eligible to take on this role.
- The eligibility of the **2<sup>nd</sup> supervisory committee member** can be the same as the 1<sup>st</sup> supervisory committee member. Alternatively, they can be appointed to other graduate programs at York University. In exceptional circumstances and with prior approval of the Dean, they may be appointed who is not a member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies at York University (for example, accomplished faculty members from other universities).

[Refer to the Health Policy & Equity Handbook for a listing of supervisory eligibility.](#)

### Approval of Dissertation Supervisory Committee

For doctoral students to remain in good academic standing, they must have a supervisor and supervisory committee in place in accordance with program requirements. The minimum Faculty of Graduate Studies requirements are as follows:

- A **Principal supervisor** must be recommended by the Graduate Program Director for approval by the Dean of Graduate Studies **no later than the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> term of study**. Students will not be able to register in the 7<sup>th</sup> term of study unless a principal supervisor has been approved.
- A **supervisory committee** must be recommended by the Graduate Program Director for approval by the Dean of Graduate Studies **no later than the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> term of study**. Students will not be able to register in the 10<sup>th</sup> term of study unless a supervisory committee has been approved.
- For the Graduate Program to meet the above stated recommendation deadlines, students are required to submit a [Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval form](#) to the Health Policy & Equity graduate program office (Room 409, HNES Building) **no later than two weeks prior to the FGS deadlines**.

## Doctoral Dissertation Regulations

### Overview

Doctoral dissertations shall be on a topic approved by the student's supervisor and supervisory committee and shall include submission and approval of a dissertation proposal, including appropriate ethics review and approval, in accordance with York's Research Ethics and procedures. Dissertations must embody the results of original research and must be successfully defended at an oral examination.

The doctoral dissertation must embody original work conducted while in program and must constitute a significant contribution to knowledge. It should contain evidence of critical understanding of the relevant literature. The material embodied in the dissertation should merit publication.

### Format of Thesis

The general form and style of dissertation may differ from program to program, but a dissertation should be a coherent document. A thesis document entails front matter, main matter, and back matter.

**Standard Dissertation:** The main matter in the standard format of thesis in Health could include chapters on introduction, literature review, methodology/methods, findings, discussion and conclusion.

**Manuscript-based Dissertation:** If a dissertation contains separate manuscripts, there needs also to be introductory and concluding chapters that explain how these separate manuscripts fit together into a unified body of research. If previously published materials are included, it should be made clear what exactly is the student's own work and what the contribution of other researchers is.

Students must comply with the requirements for the preparation, submission and distribution of theses as described on the **Faculty of Graduate Studies [Thesis and Dissertation regulations](#)**.

### Dissertation Examining Committees

A dissertation examining committee shall consist of **at least five voting members, including the Chair**, as follows:

- a. The Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies or her/his representative, who will be at arm's length from the supervision of the dissertation, and who will serve as Chair of the examining committee;
- b. One external examiner, from outside York University, at arm's length from the dissertation, recommended by the Graduate Program Director;
- c. one graduate faculty member at arm's length from the dissertation, and normally from outside the program, recommended by the Graduate Program Director;
- d. two graduate faculty members from the supervisory committee, or one member from the supervisory committee and one graduate faculty member from the program.

These are minimum requirements with respect to the composition of and quorum for dissertation examining committees. Individual graduate programs may include one additional voting member on examining committees, in accordance with program requirements and procedures.

In addition to the voting members, the thesis examining committee may include the following ex-officio members (non-voting, unless present as one of the voting members named above): Vice-President Academic & Provost, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies or his/her representative, Graduate Program Director.

The membership of each committee must be recommended by the appropriate Graduate Program Director for approval and appointment by the Dean of Graduate Studies as soon as possible and no later than four weeks before the date set for the oral examination. In exceptional circumstances, the Dean may approve a Program Director's recommendation that a York University faculty member who is not a member of the graduate faculty serve as a member (but not the Chair) of an examining committee.

Members of the examining committee are normally expected to attend the oral examination in person, except where decanal permission for the use alternative technologies such as video- or teleconferencing has been granted. The rationale for this examination mode must be made by the program to the Dean. Normally, no more than one member of an examining committee should be linked to the examination process through alternative means. Only in exceptional circumstances would the supervisor, an internal York member, or the student be the off-site participant.

With the consent of the voting members of the examination committee, the Program Director and the student, the Dean may approve a recommendation that an oral examination be rescheduled due to exceptional circumstances.

### **Conduct of the Oral Examination**

1. Before an oral can be convened, a majority of the examining committee members must agree that the dissertation is examinable. The graduate program director shall poll the members of that committee one week before the scheduled date for the oral. If the student does not receive a majority vote, the members of the examining committee who do not agree that the dissertation is examinable are required to give their reasons in writing to the student, the supervisor, and the Dean within one week after the poll. In such cases, the oral shall be postponed for a period not to exceed one year. However, the student has the right to insist that the oral proceed as planned.
2. The time and place of oral examination shall be set by the graduate program director in consultation with the student, the Chair and members of the examining committee and with the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies. Normally, the examination shall be held no less than four weeks from the date on which copies of the completed dissertation approved by the supervisory committee are sent to each member of the examining committee. The examination may be held less than four weeks from the time copies are sent to the examining committee provided all parties agree.
3. The oral examination will center on the dissertation.
4. The oral examination is a public academic event. Faculty members, graduate students and others may attend oral examinations at the discretion of the Chair of the examining committee. They may, at the discretion of the Chair, participate in the questioning. Only members of the examining committee may be present for the evaluation and for the vote at the conclusion of an oral examination.



5. The dissertation oral examination requirement is met if one of the following situations exists:
  - a. if the committee accepts the dissertation with no revisions; or,
  - b. if the committee accepts the dissertation with specified revisions.
6. Specified revisions could range from typographical errors or changes of a minor editorial nature, to specified insertions or deletions which do not radically modify the development/argument of the dissertation. The committee must specify such changes with precision. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that all such changes are made, and the Dean's representative will confirm that this is the case. Specified revisions must be completed within six months of the date of the oral examination.
7. In cases where there are no more than two votes for major revision or one vote for failure, then specified revisions are expected.
8. A dissertation is referred for major revision if any of the following conditions exist:
  - i. the committee agrees that the dissertation requires substantive changes in order to be acceptable; or,
  - ii. there are two votes for failure; or,
  - iii. there is one vote for failure **plus** a minimum of one vote for major revision; or,
  - iv. there are at least three votes for major revision.
9. In the cases of major revision, one of the following procedures, agreed upon by the committee before the examination is adjourned, must be used to finalize the oral results:
  - a. the committee will reconvene within twelve months to continue the oral examination; or,
  - b. the revised dissertation will be circulated within twelve months to all members, who will inform the Dean's representative whether they feel the stipulated requirements have been met.
10. Detailed reasons for referring pending major revisions must be supplied in writing by the Chair to the Dean, the program director and the student concerned within two weeks.
11. After an adjournment and when the major revisions have been completed, the dissertation is failed if there are two or more votes for failure. A dissertation cannot be referred for major revisions more than once and no further adjournment is permitted. In the event of failure, detailed reasons must be supplied in writing by the Chair to the Dean, program director and student within two weeks.
12. A dissertation is failed if there are a minimum of three votes for failure. In the event of failure, detailed reasons must be supplied in writing by the Chair to the Dean, program director and student within two weeks.
13. Decisions of the thesis examining committee are communicated to the Faculty of Graduate Studies' Thesis Office, usually in the form of the Oral Examination Report containing appropriate signatures, through the Chair of the Examining Committee.
14. The degree completion date is NOT based on the date of the oral examination; it is based on the date of submission to the Office of the Dean, Graduate Studies of the **acceptable final approved copy**. Students are responsible for active registration and all tuition fees until the final copy is submitted to and approved by the Office of



the Dean, Graduate Studies. The graduate program office can proceed to a final degree audit, when the student successfully meets the final electronic upload submission into the theses database with the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Students expecting to be awarded degrees will be in communication with the graduate office for Convocation details.

## Dissertation Regulations, Ethics forms and Scholarship/Prizes

In addition to the above stated regulations, graduate students are also expected to be familiar with the following policies or guidelines.

1. **Faculty of Graduate Studies [Thesis and Dissertation](#) information page**
2. **If your research involves human participants**, see the [Research Ethics](#) section of the Faculty of Graduate Studies website for information and forms.
  - a. [Form TD1](#): Thesis/Dissertation Research Proposal
  - b. [Form TD2](#): Research Ethics Protocol form for Graduate Student Thesis, Dissertation or Pilot Project
  - c. Informed Consent Template
  - d. [Form TD4](#): Statement of Relationship between Proposal and an Existing HPRC-Approved Project (if applicable)
  - e. [Amendment Request Form Graduate Student](#) (thesis or dissertation)
3. [Policy on Academic Honesty](#)
4. [SSHRC Fellowships and CGS Doctoral Awards](#): The SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships and Joseph–Armand Bombardier CGS Doctoral Scholarships aim to develop research skills and assist in the training of highly qualified personnel by supporting students who demonstrate a high standard of scholarly achievement in undergraduate and graduate studies in the social sciences and humanities.
5. [Susan Mann Dissertation Scholarship](#): An opportunity to encourage and assist outstanding students in their final year of doctoral study to concentrate exclusively on and complete their dissertations. It is designed to be awarded to students who have made significant progress on the research and writing of their dissertations, and who will forge ahead independently and with their supervisory committees.
6. [Thesis/Dissertation Prizes](#): The Faculty of Graduate Studies will award a maximum of six (6) thesis prizes for exceptional theses defended in a given year (*i.e.*, calendar year January 1 to December 31). Normally three (3) of these will be awarded for Doctoral dissertations (if nominated by Graduate Program Director).

## Information on Writing a Research Paper

1. [York University Libraries - Academic Writing Guide, Footnotes/Bibliographies/Refworks on-line tutorials and examples](#)
2. [The Relationship Between the Research Question, Hypotheses, Specific Aims, and Long-Term Goals of the Project](#)
3. [Writing a Research Paper](#)
4. [Library Research Using Primary Resources](#)
5. [Library Research: Finding Primary Sources](#)
6. [Harvard Styles for references/bibliography](#)
7. [Writing Centre at Harvard University](#)
8. [A Research Guide for Students](#)
9. [A Guide for Writing Research Papers based on Styles Recommended by the American Psychological Association](#)
10. [OWL On-line Writing Lab](#)
11. [Preparing for Thesis Research](#)
12. [Developing a Research Thesis](#)
13. [Developing a Research Question](#)
14. [Dissertation Proposal Workshop](#)
15. [What is a Systematic Review?](#)

## Forms for PhD students

For all required PhD forms, please see the [Guidelines, Policies and Forms section](#) of the Graduate Program in Health Policy & Equity website.

### **Licence, Copyright, Technical Requirements and Final ETD submission**

1. [Theses Non-Exclusive Licence](#)
2. [Copyright](#)
3. [Reimbursement of Thesis/Dissertation](#)
4. [Organization and Technical Requirements](#)
5. Final Submission of Dissertation Electronically to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS)

York University's Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) record will be created for each successful candidate that passed the oral defence. This email will arrive from the thesis coordinator in the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies once all the following have been received:

- Oral Examination Report (passed)
- Revisions Approved Memorandum, if applicable
- Library and Archives Canada Theses Non-Exclusive License form, signed and dated
- Copies of copyright permissions (if applicable)

Once an ETD record is opened, the student will receive an email with instructions on how to log in and complete their submission. Students should ensure that they have followed the organization and technical requirements for theses/dissertations prior to making a submission to the Office of the Dean, Graduate Studies through the ETD platform.

Appendix 1: Cover Page for Comprehensive Exam Paper

[TITLE]

[Student Name]

Supervisor: [Name]

Advisor: [Name]

Comprehensive Examination Paper [1 or 2] submitted to the Graduate Program in Health in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctoral of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Health  
York University  
Toronto, Ontario  
M3J 1P3

[Month, Date, Year]