



# PhD Program in Health

## Dissertation Process, Graduate Supervision, Research Ethics and Timelines

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## Doctoral Degree - Minimum Requirements and Regulations

### Doctoral Degree-Level Expectations

The doctoral degree-level expectations and program-specific learning outcomes are provided below. The structure and requirements of Health Ph.D. program are intended to support the achievement of degree-level expectations and program-specific learning outcomes. The Ph.D. degree extends the skills associated with the Master's degree and will be awarded to students who have demonstrated the following skills and abilities:

<b>Degree Level Expectations</b>	<b>PhD in Health Program Learning Outcomes</b>
<b>Depth &amp; breadth of knowledge</b>	<u>PLO PhD 1</u> : Articulate a thorough understanding of a substantial body of multi-disciplinary concepts, approaches and issues at the leading edge of the field to inform the study of health policy and equity OR health system management and health data analytics.
<b>Research and scholarship</b>	<u>PLO PhD 2</u> : Select from and apply multi-disciplinary concepts and approaches that inform the research process in a way that confirms, refines or extends knowledge in the field of health policy and equity OR health system management and health data analytics.
<b>Level of application of knowledge</b>	<u>PLO PhD 3</u> : Navigate theoretical, practical, and ethical challenges while conceptualizing and conducting original scholarly investigation to generate new knowledge of suitable quality for peer review and that merits presentation / publication.
<b>Professional capacity / autonomy</b>	<p><u>PLO PhD 4</u>: Demonstrate autonomous initiative in complex situations, intellectual independence and engagement with the field, ethical behaviour and academic integrity necessary for employment.</p> <p><u>PLO PhD 5</u>: Provide, receive and act on constructive peer review to enhance the quality of one's peers and one's own academic work.</p> <p><u>PLO PhD 6</u>: Evaluate the broader implications of sharing and applying knowledge in and to particular contexts.</p>
<b>Level of communication skills</b>	<u>PLO PhD 7</u> : Clearly, accurately and concisely communicate complex ideas, arguments, and research findings and justify conclusions about health research questions in oral, written, chart and diagram formats.
<b>Awareness of limits of knowledge</b>	<u>PLO PhD 8</u> : Recognize the limitations of one's own work, training, and discipline, as well as the complexity of knowledge, and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines/perspectives.

## **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.

The doctoral degree in Health graduate program requires completion of the required courses and two comprehensive papers prior to development of a dissertation proposal, including appropriate ethics review and approval, which follows the undertaking of dissertation project. The student then prepares a written document on the dissertation embodying the results of original research, and successful defense of this dissertation at an oral examination.

## **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.

## **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.

## **Annual Progress Reports**

Students in Health doctoral program submit a Report on Progress **by May 31st of each year** (or the following business day if May 31st falls on a public holiday) to the Graduate Program Office, where the Graduate Program Director reviews the status of the student's academic progress. In Year 1 and 2, a student shall meet the supervisory committee for the Comprehensive Papers to discuss progress and submit the Report. In case a student has not identified a supervisor, the student should meet the Graduate Program Director and complete the Progress Report. Once Dissertation supervisor and/or supervisory committee is established, the student shall meet them annually for

progress evaluation. After each of the progress focused meeting, the student shall submit the completed Report to the Graduate Program Office. **Reports to the Graduate Program Director of unsatisfactory progress may require a doctoral student to withdraw from the graduate program in which the student is enrolled.**

## **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. **Students are to review guidelines to establish expectations and responsibilities with their graduate supervisor before supervision begins.** Both students and supervisors are to familiarize themselves with the FGS Graduate Supervision Hub (upcoming in Fall 2024)

### **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:
    - at the proposal stage, assist the student with selection of a suitable and manageable topic and approach.
    - 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 defense 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 defense. 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 defense 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.

Please refer to the Faculty of Graduate studies [supervision guidelines](#) (click on Doctoral Students tab) on "**Discussion Topics to Inform Productive Supervisory Relationships**."

### **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](#).

## Dissertation Supervisory Committee

Students in PhD program should make themselves aware of when and how to establish their Dissertation Supervisory Committee in terms of composition, approval process, and eligible faculty in Health graduate program.

### a. Composition

A dissertation supervisory committee will consist of a minimum of three members from the Faculty of Graduate Studies, at least two of whom must be members of the graduate program in which the student is enrolled.

- The **Principal Supervisor** must be a **Full Member** of the Health graduate program. The **exceptions** to this are:
  1. An Associate Member of the graduate program may serve as a Co-Supervisor on the condition that the other Co-Supervisor is a Full Member of the graduate program.
  2. Should program need arise, 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 in the specified Health field.
- The eligibility of the **2<sup>nd</sup> supervisory committee member** can be the same as the 1<sup>st</sup> supervisory committee member from HP&E OR HSM&HDA field. Alternatively, with permission of the supervisor and GPD, s/he/they can be appointed to other graduate programs at York University. In exceptional circumstances and with prior approval of the Dean, s/he/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).

In other words, all faculty appointed in the Health graduate program can serve on the dissertation supervisory committee and the examining committees for doctoral dissertation. However, not all of them are eligible to be a Principal Supervisor (see table on the Faculty Members Eligible for Supervision provided in Graduate Student Handbook on the program website).

**[Refer to the Health Student Handbook for a listing of supervisory eligibility.](#)**

### b. **Approval Timeline**

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. Unless a principal supervisor has been approved, students will **not be able to register in the 7<sup>th</sup> term** of study .

- A **dissertation 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. Unless a supervisory committee has been approved, students will **not be able to register in the 10<sup>th</sup> term** of study
- If these deadlines are not met, then a registration block is placed by the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

For the graduate program to meet the above stated deadlines, students are required to submit a [Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval form](#) to the Health graduate program office ([gradhlth@yorku.ca](mailto:gradhlth@yorku.ca)).



## Dissertation Process – 8 Stages

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

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

The dissertation process has **several stages** as below.

1. The establishment of a **Supervisory Committee** which consists of **three faculty members** – see details above for composition and deadlines.

### [Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval form](#)

2. Arrange meetings with the Principal Supervisor and the Supervisory Committee as needed, to discuss and refine the dissertation proposal. The typical length of a Dissertation Proposal in the Graduate Program in Health is 5,000 to 7,500 words for the main text, formatted as single-spaced with 1-inch margins and a 12 pt font. This generally fits between 10 to 15 pages, excluding the cover page, table of contents, reference list, appendices, and footnotes. A completed [TD1 form](#) indicating the appropriate category must accompany the proposal signed off by supervisor with attestation that the Supervisory Committee (listing the member names) has reviewed and approved the dissertation research proposal and research ethics protocols OR TD1 form can be signed by each member of Supervisory Committee.

The purpose of the proposal is to provide guidance for the successful completion of the dissertation. **It should succinctly and clearly explain the aims, objectives, rationale, and methodology/methods of the dissertation research project along with dissertation structure and timelines with sections like:**

- a. Statement of Problem: briefly describe the overarching purpose and specific research objectives of the dissertation project.
- b. Rationale or Background: summarize related existing scholarly work to justify the purpose and objectives of the dissertation project. Also, explain why it is important to the specialization in *Health Policy & Equity (HP&E)* or *Health Systems Management & Health Data Analytics (HSM&HDA)* and what original contribution your dissertation will make to the field.
- c. Methodology/Methods: explain your methodological approach to research such as research paradigm, theories/conceptual frameworks employed, sources of research data and methods of data collection (e.g. from human participants, archival sources, secondary sources, arts/media-based material, mixture of above), ethical consideration, and plan for analysis and interpretation.
- d. Dissertation structure: provide a preliminary outline of sections for the dissertation document.
- e. Timeline.
- f. A reference list of all sources cited in the research proposal.
- g. Any additional supporting materials can be included as an appendix (e.g. consent form, questionnaire, support letters from collaborators etc.).

When writing your dissertation proposal, you will need to work with your supervisory committee at all stages. Once the proposal is **passed** by a student's dissertation supervisory committee, the student submits the final dissertation proposal and any research ethics forms (CORE- 22 certificate, [TD1](#) and or TD2) together to the

Graduate Program Office for review. Please ensure that your dissertation supervisor signs the TD1 and/or TD2 forms. Include the appropriate documents outlined in the TD1 category that relates to your research and methodologies.

**A completed dissertation proposal, TD1 form (with research ethics approval, if required) must be approved for all doctoral students by FGS/Research Ethics by Term 9 (end of Year 3).**

**DO NOT SUBMIT** incomplete packages to the Graduate Program Office. Students wait for approval from Research Ethics before they proceed with primary data collection or secondary data analysis. This will take several weeks for a final decision. Students cannot begin data collection until FGS approves their entire dissertation proposal with research ethics protocols.

3. 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.
4. The process of **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.
  - a) The dissertation committee is responsible to notify the home graduate office (in writing) when the dissertation is defensible.
  - b) Each student must have an approved dissertation proposal with ethics approval (if applicable) on file with the graduate program and Faculty of Graduate Studies or the oral examination cannot proceed to be scheduled.
  - c) The graduate program office must receive a range of dates to schedule and or a tentative date to confirm graduate office logistics and Chair/GPA availability.
  - d) The dissertation supervisor is responsible to submit the contact emails of the internal and external examiners to the graduate office, and the e-copy of the dissertation is submitted simultaneously with the supervisors' request for oral defense examination.
  - e) The graduate office shares the dissertation with the internal and external examiners.
  - f) The graduate program office proceeds to schedule the defense. Examining Committee will be recommended to the Graduate Program Office, who verifies and obtains final approval by the Graduate Program Director and the Faculty of Graduate Studies.
  - g) FGS sends official documents and instructions to the Chair, external examiner, student, and committee.
5. Oral examinations for doctoral dissertations shall be held normally **no less than 30 business days** from the date on which the copies of the dissertation approved by the supervisory committee are sent to each member of the examination committee.
6. In preparation for the final oral defense, the student is responsible for sending

the final e-copy of the thesis document (approved by supervisory committee) to the Graduate Program Office who is then responsible to share **the e-copy** with all members of the examining committee (i.e., dissertation committee, Internal Examiner, External Examiner, and exam chair). If there is a request from Internal or External examiner(s) to receive a print copy, then the student would send the paper copy to the Graduate Program Office which will mail to the examiner(s). (the pagination and formatting of each page of the paper copies and the e-copies must match). The student should not send dissertation e-copy or paper copy to Internal or External examiners.

- 7. The oral defense occurs at York University.** The oral defense centered on the dissertation and matters related to it, are presided over by an Examining Committee. The examination may be conducted in person, remotely by videoconference, or in hybrid format, the student's preference of which is to be considered.
- 8.** As of May 1, 2024, external examiners who would otherwise require local lodging will be asked to **participate remotely** via videoconference unless there is a demonstrable benefit to in-person participation. **Local members of the examination committee are expected to participate in person, on campus.** For doctoral oral examinations, if more than two participants in the examination in total wish to participate remotely via videoconference, then the candidate and supervisor must consent, with a rationale provided to the Graduate Program Office to share with the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies for approval. The wishes of the examination candidate are paramount to the Dean's decision.
- 9. Post-defense items:** The oral exam is not the final step. There may be revisions, formatting, working with the Faculty of Graduate Studies to upload the final dissertation to the Electronic Thesis Database. The completion of degree requirements includes the upload of the final dissertation. The Graduate Program Office can only begin the degree audit to ensure **all PhD requirements are completed** by August 31<sup>st</sup> (for October convocation), December 31<sup>st</sup> (for Winter conferral) and April 30<sup>th</sup> (for June convocation), no exceptions.

## Dissertation Proposals

In accordance with program requirements and procedures, all students should prepare a thesis/dissertation proposal, normally in consultation with their supervisor and members of supervisory committee in advance of commencing their proposed inquiry. Each program should have written guidelines and should communicate them to candidates, as and when appropriate. A dissertation proposal outlines the research methodology and if the data collection methods involve research ethics.

At a minimum, the proposal should contain a brief statement in non-technical language on the purpose/goals of the thesis/dissertation research, its relationship to existing work in the area, through an abbreviated literature review, the research question(s), the proposed methodology(ies) with rationale, and the contribution which the researcher hopes to make to the advancement of knowledge in the field. In addition, the proposal includes a title, the name of the supervisor and the supervisory committee. The title should indicate as clearly as possible the area of research, but it is understood that this title may change. The recommended length of a proposal is a maximum of 15 pages (single space) for the Graduate Program in Health. Proposals must be reviewed and approved by a student's thesis or dissertation committee.

### **Academic Milestone/Timeline:**

According to the FGS policy of Fall 2023, all incoming doctoral students must have an approved dissertation proposal (with research ethics approval, if applicable) **by Term 9**. Failure to do so will result in student's inability to register in the subsequent term.

Doctoral students with disabilities are to be mindful that they must complete and have an approved dissertation proposal with the [TD1](#) form and approved research ethics by **Term 9 (end of Year 3)**. If the academic milestones are not completed, an advising block is placed to necessitate a meeting with the supervisor and Graduate Program Director and student. Academic accommodations may adjust the expected rate of progress for some students with disabilities, however **all doctoral students (full and part-time)** are expected to meet this dissertation proposal timeline.

### **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.

The first step is the completion of the [CORE22 Tutorial and Certificate](#). As indicated on the Form TD1: Thesis/Dissertation Research Submission form, submission of the dissertation proposal to the Office of the Dean, Graduate Studies for approval must include the [relevant research ethics form and documentation](#). Even if the research method does not involve primary data collection or secondary data analysis, the TD1 form must be completed and submitted with the proposal.

- Refer to the [updates on ethical conduct for research with human participants ,indigenous research, secondary data analysis](#).
- Determine the category of your research and the necessary [forms](#), under 'Research Ethics'
- 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 [CORE-22 tutorial certificate](#), upon completion
- Students are responsible to sign and submit the entire package to the graduate program office ([gradhlth@yorku.ca](mailto:gradhlth@yorku.ca))

The Graduate Program Office will vet and 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. See the [Quick Guide on the Ethics Review process](#) for faculty members and students). Students are to be registered as active to receive their approval certificate.

Data Collection cannot occur until after the research ethics approval is issued. The doctoral student must be actively registered when conducting research with human participants.

Please note that the deadlines outlined above are the FGS's minimum requirements (unless specified otherwise), and individual graduate programs may have more specific requirements and timelines with respect to the development, review, and approval of dissertation proposals. Students should consult their program for more details.

## **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.

### **Types of Dissertations**

Programs specify the dissertation formats allowed in their programs in the academic calendar and refer to the [York University Dissertation Format Guide for Faculty Members and Graduate Students](#). Dissertation types in the Graduate Program in Health are either monograph or manuscript based.

**Monograph Dissertation:** This is the traditional style of 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:** The manuscript-based thesis/dissertation is composed of articles on a common theme/subject. The general form and style of this type of thesis/dissertation may differ from program to program, but a thesis/dissertation should be a coherent work. A text explaining the coherence of the components must conform to the preface guidelines in Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) regulations.

### **Components of a manuscript-based dissertation**

As with traditional dissertations, manuscript-based dissertations form a cohesive and unified narrative on a specific research area. They must be current and include the following:

- **Introduction:** provides the background and situates the manuscripts within the larger theoretical and methodological contexts and substantive concerns. It also situates the questions guiding the research.
- **Manuscripts:** formatted as chapters within the dissertation, a series of three or four

manuscripts provides new, original, and relevant contributions to the field of study, jointly exploring the various aspects of the dissertation's research questions. The number of manuscripts varies by discipline and should be decided by the student in consultation with the supervisor. Connecting text may be added between them so that the dissertation functions as an integrated whole, with continuity and logical progression from one manuscript to the next.

- **Discussion:** shows the overall significance and contribution to knowledge of each manuscript in the context of the entire body of work and research field, lists and elaborates on limitations, points to future research directions, and provides policy and/or practice recommendations. Importantly, this section is not a detailed account of the discussion section in each manuscript but rather an integrated discussion of individual manuscripts.

### **Requirements for each manuscript**

- Each manuscript must be current.
- When co-authored manuscripts are included, the student must be the first author and a signed statement that authorizes the use of the co-authored manuscript must be collected by the student from each of the co-authors. The template for the co-authors' signatures will be drafted by the student that argues for including the manuscript in the dissertation.
- Co-authored manuscripts must be prefaced by a statement of authorship and contributions. This statement will detail the role of the student and of those who provided support with conceptualizing the research question and study design; acquiring, analysing and interpreting the data; drafting or revising the manuscript for substantive intellectual content; and supervising the overall study. The statement should also include the names of the journals to which the manuscripts have been, or will be, submitted. If any manuscript has already been published, copyright information should be provided.
- By the time of the defense, manuscripts should be ready for submission or should have already been submitted, although they need not have been accepted for publication. In all cases, journals must be peer reviewed.

### **Formatting the manuscript-based dissertation**

As with traditional dissertations, the manuscript-based dissertation must be formatted as a unified whole. Formatting must be consistent throughout the dissertation: font style and size, line spacing, and margin sizes should be uniform; numbering scheme for tables, figures, footnotes, and citations should also be consistent. Lastly, while each manuscript will have its own bibliography, the dissertation as a unified body of work should have a single, comprehensive bibliography that includes all the sources listed throughout the dissertation. This bibliography should be situated after the main body of text and before the appendices. This formatting may require changing the formatting of the manuscripts for submission to the academic journals for publication.

The general requirements for types of doctoral dissertations by the Faculty of Graduate Studies are located [here](#).

## **Language and Technical Requirement 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.

### **Technical Requirements (Refer to FGS Organization and Technical Requirements section)**

**Page Size:** 8 ½ by 11 letter size

**Font:** 10 – 12-point font (e.g., Arial or Times Roman) used throughout the dissertation, particularly the main body.

The font size of the main body of the dissertation must be a minimum of 10 points, with smaller font sizes permitted for endnotes/footnotes, graphs formulae appendices, etc. A font size larger than 12 points is not recommended for the main body of the dissertation.

**Line Spacing:** At least 1.5 spaces or Double spaced  
Left aligned.

**Title page, Abstract Guidelines, Table of Contents, Page number Location, Diagrams and Tables, Photographs and Images: refer to the FGS link.**

**Margins:** All margins must be at least 1 inch (25mm). Margin may be wider but not narrower than the stated requirements. For example, the first page of every chapter may have a top margin of 2.5 inches.

## **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.

## **Dissertation Examining Committees**

According to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, 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 Internal Examiner who is a York University 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 by the Faculty of Graduate Studies 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 the Health Graduate Program, three supervisory

committee members are voting members for the doctoral dissertation exam. The Graduate Program Director for Health, or their delegate, chairs the dissertation exam ensuring the standards of scholarship, fairness, and procedural details.

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.

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 exam 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. At the oral exam, the student may be given the opportunity to present an oral summary of their work. If this procedure is followed, the Chair of the exam committee will inform the student and indicate the time available. In the Health Graduate Program, a defending doctoral student should prepare a succinct 15-20 minute oral presentation; they are encouraged to prepare PowerPoint slides with high level points.
  - Normally, the first round of questions will refer to general aspects of the work. Subsequent questions will deal with more detailed matters. For all doctoral dissertation oral exams and for those master's programs that require an external or outside examiner, the external examiner will normally begin each round of questioning and will be followed by the other members of the committee in an order agreed upon before the exam.
  - The Chair of the exam committee will ensure that each member of the exam committee has an equal opportunity to pose questions. After the formal rounds of



- questioning, general discussion and order of further questioning will be at the Chair's discretion.
- The question period should normally run its natural course, with members of the exam committee indicating when they are satisfied. The Chair of the exam committee will, however, use their discretion as to the appropriate closing point
5. 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. The attendees will not 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.
  6. 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.
  7. **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.
  8. In cases where there are no more than two votes for major revision or one vote for failure, then specified revisions are expected.
  9. A dissertation is referred for **major revision** if any of the following conditions exist:
    - i. the committee agrees that the dissertation requires substantive changes 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.
  10. 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.
  11. 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.
  12. 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.

13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.

# Academic Honesty, Accommodations and Dissertation Scholarship/Prizes

## 1. [Policy on Academic Honesty](#)

Academic conduct, particularly with respect to plagiarism, are grounded in a principle and practice that forms the basis of the academic enterprise—namely, that the work one submits for evaluation is the product of one's own original ideas, and that any material that belongs to someone else, because he or she first produced and/or presented it, must be properly referenced, and cited.

## How to Avoid Academic Dishonesty

### [York University Libraries Graduate Student Support](#)

There are several citation styles that describe in detail how to reference and cite the work of others properly in one's own work. Graduate students are responsible to ensure that they are aware of and properly follow an appropriate citation style. Uncertainty about which citation style should be followed can be cleared up by consulting with one's course director or program director.

The York University Libraries [Graduate Student Library Guide](#) provides a number of useful resources, including links to the guides for the most popularly used citation styles, access to Zotero (which is a web-based bibliographic management/citation manager tool), and links to research and writing guides.

## 2. [Accommodations for Graduate Students](#)

Academic accommodations are meant to remove barriers faced by students with disabilities in relation to their degree expectations (courses, comprehensives, proposal, and dissertation writing)

Scholarship/Award Nominations are made by examining committees for doctoral candidates, after the oral defense is successful.

3. [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 final years of graduate studies in the social sciences and humanities.

4. [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.

5. [Thesis/Dissertation Prizes](#): The Faculty of Graduate Studies will award a maximum of six (6) thesis prizes for exceptional theses defended each 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**

[Citing Your Work & Academic Integrity - York University Libraries](#)

[The Relationship Between the Research Question, Hypotheses, Specific Aims, and Long- Term Goals of the Project](#)

[Writing a Research Paper](#)

[Library Research Using Primary Resources](#)

[Library Research: Finding Primary Sources](#)

[Writing Centre at Harvard University](#)

[A Research Guide for Students](#)

[A Guide for Writing Research Papers based on Styles Recommended by the American Psychological Association](#)

[OWL On-line Writing Lab](#)

[Preparing for Thesis Research](#)

[Dissertation Proposal Workshop](#)