



PHD IN SOCIAL WORK

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Welcome to the PhD Program in Social Work. We have compiled this handbook to help guide you through your studies. The handbook contains the policies and procedures for the PhD program. It will serve as a reference for both students and faculty members. While faculty and staff members will work to ensure your successful completion of the program, students are responsible to make sure that all degree requirements and deadlines are met. You should feel free to speak with the Graduate Administrative Assistant, the Graduate Chair, or your Supervisor if you have any questions or concerns.

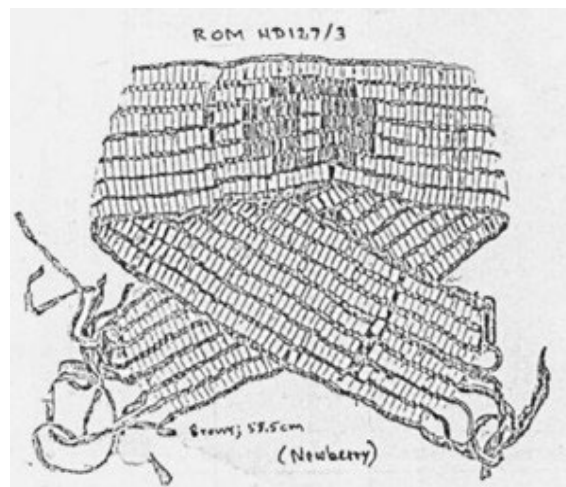
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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As many of us are settlers on this land, it is our collective responsibility to recognize, respect and acknowledge that the School of Social Work at McMaster University meets and learns on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish with One Spoon” Wampum.

The Dish with One Spoon wampum belt represents the first peace treaty made in North America between all Native nations before European contact. (Made between the League of Five Nations and its allies, and the confederacy of Anishinabek and allied nations). The dish with one spoon reminds people we only have one dish; one mother earth we can take from. We should take only what we need, leave something for others, and keep the dish clean. It also demonstrates our collective responsibility to share equally. The dish is graphically represented by the wampum pictured.



Why we acknowledge the land

For people who are not Indigenous to North America, or for Indigenous peoples who are on territories that aren't their own, a land acknowledgment recognizes the First Nation(s) on whose land we live and work. It asks those gathered to understand the history that has removed many First Nations from their traditional land. This symbolic acknowledgment recognizes the real impact of colonization, and draws attention to its ongoing effects. This acknowledgement also encourages us to seek and find the beauty associated with all Indigenous cultures in ways that challenge how we think and respond to the violent history of colonialism on these peoples.

Canada's history is a colonial history

Indigenous people have been living on the land that is now called Canada for thousands of years. Since the 17th century however, settlers have been laying their claim to the land and violently forcing Indigenous groups out of the way. It is estimated that North America's Indigenous population was reduced by 80 percent by the mid-19th century.

Starting in the late 19th century, the Canadian government established Indian Residential Schools. These schools forced young Indigenous children away from their parents and communities and attempted to eliminate the Indigenous languages and cultures of its students. This policy remained in place until the 1990s. In the 1960's Canadian child protection policies reinforced these practices through what is referred to as the '60's scoop' which supported the removal of Indigenous babies and children from their homes and communities. Despite this, Indigenous peoples have remained a strong and vital part of Canada. By acknowledging that Canada's history is a colonial history, we recognize the violence of settler-colonialism and the necessity for reconciliation. It reminds us also of our moral and ethical duty to join Indigenous peoples in ally ship to confront this continuing history.

Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada published 94 "calls to action" urging all levels of government — federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous — to work together to change policies and programs in a concerted effort to repair the harm caused by residential schools and move forward with reconciliation.

The McMaster School of Social Work acknowledges and is committed to responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.

We urge our entire school community to familiarize themselves with the [Canadian Association for Social Work Education Statement of Complicity and Commitment to Change](#).

The McMaster School of Social Work would like to acknowledge the multiple sources of information we have accessed in order to develop this Land Acknowledgement. This includes faculty in the McMaster School of Social Work, the Toronto Metropolitan University School of Social Work, and the AIDS Committee of Toronto.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The PhD in Social Work will prepare candidates for research, teaching and positions of leadership in social work, social welfare and social activism. The program will stimulate and support scholarship aimed at redressing social inequalities and enhancing social justice. This interdisciplinary program includes doctoral students from social work and other social justice-oriented fields. Supervisory committee members are similarly diverse. Students will develop a critical understanding of relevant literature related to social justice and social work and deepen their understanding with perspectives from other areas of study. The sequencing of course work, comprehensive examination and thesis is organized to ensure that students build a wide and critical appreciation of historic, canonical and current scholarship on social work and social justice.

PROGRAM TIMELINE

As with many doctoral programs across the university, the program is designed to be completed in four years, although there are many possible pathways through the program. At least four years are spent in full-time, on-campus study (see the [School of Graduate Studies Calendar, section 2.5.6](#), for the regulations regarding full-time status). The School of Graduate Studies (SGS) regulations stipulate that the PhD is **typically** limited to a maximum of six years from initial registration in the doctoral program at McMaster. Funding is guaranteed for the first four years of the program.

Coursework is typically completed in the first two years of the program. This is followed by the comprehensive proposal and examination, the thesis proposal and doctoral research, and the defence of the thesis. Students wishing to complete the program in four years would typically take two courses in each of the first two terms during year 1, along with the Doctoral Research Seminar (773). Courses to be completed include 770, 771, 773 and an elective. The first three classes of 772, the research methods course, will take place in May of Year 1. These classes will prepare students to complete Research Ethics Board applications and generate preliminary data over the summer. They will complete an additional elective in the third term of Year 1. In Year 2, students working towards a four-year trajectory will complete the research methods (772) course and complete their comprehensive exam. Students would then spend Years 3 and 4 writing and submitting their thesis proposal, conducting their doctoral research, and writing their thesis. After submitting their dissertation, students will undergo an oral examination as the final requirement for their degree.

We share this four-year pathway as a means of outlining the typical sequencing of the program. Other students choose different trajectories: they may, for example, choose to complete additional coursework relevant to their topic or a diploma program that augments and supports their learning and scholarly work.

Other factors may influence a decision to pursue a different pathway (e.g., access issues, health or childcare issues, etc.). All students are encouraged to work with their supervisors to determine the most appropriate pathway for their successful completion of the program.

Leave of Absence

Typically, students in the PhD program are only eligible for a leave of absence (for up to one year) due to illness. Students who have successfully completed at least one full year in a graduate program may apply for a Leave of Absence once (for up to one year) for other personal circumstances. Please see [SGS Calendar, Section 2.5.7](#) for more details.

(See information on [accommodation and support services](#).)

COURSE WORK REQUIREMENTS

All PhD students must complete a minimum of six (6) post-MSW courses (course descriptions are available on the School of Social Work website):

- Social Work 770: Social Work and Social Justice: Theoretical Tensions
- Social Work 771: Research for Social Change: Practical, Ethical and Process Issues
- Social Work 772: Qualitative Methods for Social Work or a research methods course selected from another department (e.g. quantitative, historical, mixed methods)
- Social Work 773: Doctoral Research Seminar
- Two elective courses in substantive areas. Electives may be selected from another department or university (with permission); one may be a directed readings course.

To ensure that students have sufficient theoretical background in critical frameworks relevant to policy, practice and activism in social welfare and social justice work, and to ensure that students have sufficient background in epistemology for the research courses and the thesis, additional courses may be required.

Students admitted without master's level courses in Critical Approaches to Social Work Knowledge (Social Work 739) and in either Social Policy: Critical Frameworks (701) or Epistemology & Social Work Practice (700) or their equivalents will be required to complete these courses in Year 1 of the doctoral program. This requirement will be determined on acceptance of admission in consultation with the student's Supervisor and the Graduate Chair. Students, in

consultation with their Supervisor, may apply for exemption from this requirement and exemptions will be approved by the Graduate Chair or designate (Note: Exemptions will be approved by the Director if the Graduate Chair is the student's Supervisor).

These additional courses may lengthen their course of study. Students who are required to complete additional courses are encouraged to discuss the timing of course completion with their supervisors.

At least one of the elective courses should be connected to the thesis topic and assist the student in reading in their area of research so as to prepare for the comprehensive exam proposal. A reading course or a course closely related to their area of research are both options.

Once all course work is complete, you MUST register in the SGS-700 placeholder course in all three terms that you are registered so that tuition fees may be assessed accordingly. If you do not see a scholarship and/or TA payment and are expecting one, please make sure you are fully enrolled (an academic or placeholder course) in all three terms (Fall, Winter & Spring/Summer).

FOUR-YEAR PROGRAM TIMELINE

***We remind students that the timeline below may not reflect the timing and sequencing of the program for all students (for example, for those who are taking additional courses, complementary diploma programs, etc.). All students are advised to talk with their supervisor to establish the best pathway for their successful completion of the program.**

Year of Study	Program courses/milestones to complete
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Work 773: Doctoral Research Seminar• Submit application for internal and external graduate scholarships. SSHRC or CIHR usually due in late September or early October; OGS due in early March (see Appendix I)• Social Work 770: Social Work & Social Justice• Social Work 771: Research for Social Change: Practical, Ethical, & Process Issues• First three classes of Social Work 772*: Qualitative Methods for Social Work (late April/ May); prepare and submit Research Ethics Board application for preliminary data collection<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ *Note: You must formally register for this course in Year 2 when a grade is assigned.• 1 or 2 Elective Courses• Nomination of Supervisory Committee Members (by February 1st)

Year of Study	Program courses/milestones to complete
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit application for internal and external graduate scholarships • Second Elective Course (if not completed in Year 1) • Social Work 772: Qualitative Methods for Social Work or another approved graduate level research methods course • Submission of <u>Comprehensive Examination Proposal</u> • Submission of <u>Comprehensive Examination</u>
Years 3 & 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit application for internal and external graduate scholarships • Submission of <u>Thesis Proposal</u> • Supervisory Committee approval of Thesis Proposal • Doctoral Research • <u>Thesis Oral Defence</u>

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Funding

Doctoral students are guaranteed minimum funding of \$25,000 in Yrs. 1-4 which includes a full teaching assistantship (TA) (or research assistantship (RA) in Lieu of TA) consisting of 260 hours of work (10 hrs/wk over 26 weeks running from Sep 1-Apr 30th) and graduate scholarship in Yrs. 1-4 (if the student applies for all external scholarships for which they are eligible).

Scholarships

Students are reminded that completion of applications for graduate scholarships (SSHRC or CIHR) are required as a condition of funding. Please refer to Appendix I, Scholarship Eligibility and Deadlines Table.

Accommodation Procedures

Students with disabilities, needing academic accommodation for degree completion, or any student who suspects they may have a disability for which some type of academic accommodation may be necessary, can contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) to arrange a time to meet with a SAS Program Coordinator. A range of accommodations, supports and funding can be reviewed to assist with degree completion requirements. SAS is located in the basement of MUSC, Room B107 or can be reached by telephone at extension 28652.

Many graduate students are also employed by the University as TAs or RAs. Students requiring workplace accommodations, or who are experiencing accommodation-related issues related to their employment as TAs or RAs, should contact [Employee Health Services](#).

The School of Social Work recognizes that people learn and express their knowledge in different ways. We are committed to reducing barriers to accessibility in the classroom and working towards classrooms that welcome diverse learners. Students who have accessibility concerns or who want to talk about their learning needs are also invited to talk to their instructor and/or the Graduate Chair.

DOCTORAL RESEARCH SEMINAR

Students in their first year are required to take part in the Doctoral Research Seminar (Social Work 773). Students in years two, three and four of the program are also encouraged to participate in the seminar. For first year students, the course is graded as either “pass” or “fail” (there is no grading for students beyond first year).

The Doctoral Research Seminar is organized to support students’ progress through the program and to facilitate connections among students and faculty. Active participation in the doctoral research seminar will help to foster a sense

of scholarly community and introduce students to research and knowledge dissemination processes and the institutional arrangements (funding, university organization) that structure them.

The seminar will typically meet every two weeks throughout the academic year (but will meet more frequently in September, October and November of each year to support students with scholarship applications and meeting faculty members to support decision-making regarding supervisory committees). A faculty member is responsible for organizing and for chairing seminar discussions.

PHD SUPERVISOR

Students are assigned a PhD Supervisor at the time of their acceptance into the program. The Supervisor will be a faculty member of the School of Social Work. An interim Supervisor may sometimes be appointed by the chairperson of the Graduate Studies Committee until an appropriate Supervisor is identified. In exceptional circumstances, a student may make a request to the Graduate Chair that they be assigned a different PhD Supervisor (for example, should the focus of a student's planned doctoral work shift).

The PhD Supervisor serves as the student's primary research and academic advisor through the entire program and acts as the Chair of the student's Supervisory Committee.

Early in the first year, each student and their Supervisor are encouraged to meet and review the [Getting the Supervisory Relationship Off To A Good Start](#) document as a means of clearly negotiating roles, responsibilities and expectations to facilitate a useful working relationship. This document can be jointly revisited and revised at any time, particularly if there are significant changes to the student's program. For more information, please refer to [Graduate Work Supervision Guidelines for Faculty and Students](#).

Students should meet with their Supervisor at minimum once every term. More frequent meetings/contact may be required at various points throughout the program (for example, thinking about the comprehensives, planning for the research, data analysis, etc.).

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

In consultation with their Supervisor, students will typically nominate a Supervisory Committee by February 1st of Year 1 of the program. (This may take place earlier in the year for some students should the student and PhD supervisor believe this to be of benefit.) Supervisory Committees are typically comprised of three faculty members (including the Supervisor), at least two of

whom are faculty members of the School of Social Work. The Supervisor, and in most cases one additional member, must be a full-time faculty member of the School of Social Work. A third committee member may be appointed from another academic department at McMaster, or from another university (with permission). In exceptional circumstances, a fourth committee member (including the Supervisor) may be approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies if the Supervisor can make a case that they have expertise essential to the thesis research area. The addition of fourth faculty member is rare, in part, because it may result in delays in degree completion. To request the appointment of an individual from outside the University, the Supervisor must send an email (include current composition of committee) with recommendation (and attach the CV of proposed member) to the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, and once approved, the Associate Dean will submit a request to the Dean of Graduate Studies. Once the Dean of Graduate Studies approves permission to participate, an email will be sent to the Supervisor.

The Supervisory Committee is a key component of students' experience in the PhD Program. Students are strongly advised to stay in regular contact with members of their Supervisory Committee. At minimum, the student and full committee should meet once per year. As outlined in [section 3.1 of the Graduate Calendar](#), members of the Supervisory Committee play a number of important roles, such as:

- overseeing the student's progress through the program;
- providing the student with regular appraisals of progress or lack of progress: working with the student, all of the Supervisory Committee members will discuss and finalize annually the *PhD Supervisory Committee Meeting Report* on the student's progress to submit to the School of Graduate Studies and make a recommendations as to whether the student should be allowed to continue in the program (details on this below in the section Annual Review of Student Progress);
- (where relevant) assisting with planning and approving the student's program of courses and research, including Research Ethics Board application;
- approving the student's comprehensive exam proposal and evaluating the student's comprehensive examination;
- approving the student's thesis proposal;
- reviewing drafts of the student's work in preparation for submission to the Supervisory Committee

- providing research advice and timely feedback to the student;
- acting as internal examiners of the completed thesis; and
- acting as members of the examination committee for the final oral defence, when so appointed.

The School of Social Work is responsible for approving the composition of the student's Supervisory Committee and for conducting an annual review of all Supervisory Committees. Supervisory Committee members and Supervisors may not resign without the approval of the School of Social Work.

CHAIR OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The chairperson of the Graduate Studies Committee is delegated the responsibility for overseeing the MSW and PhD programs. Students should feel free to contact the Graduate Chair if they have any questions or concerns about the program. Students are strongly encouraged to raise any concerns about supervision directly with their Supervisors. Students may consult with the Graduate Chair in the event that they have concerns about their Supervisor or their Supervisory Committee that they are unable to resolve directly with those individuals. In the situation where the student's supervisor is the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee, and they have concerns about their Supervisor that they are unable to resolve, students should consult with the Director of the School of Social Work.

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Membership of the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) includes three faculty members and three students; 2 MSW, 1 PhD.

The mandate of the Graduate Studies Committee includes the following:

- To monitor and support the graduate program in accordance with the School's philosophy, CASWE standards, IQAP requirements and University regulations.
- To engage in planning and curriculum development.
- To undertake admissions and recruitment, and from time to time review admissions procedures and practices.
- To enable and support graduate student participation in the life of the School.
- To make recommendations to and advise the Faculty Committee and Director.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF STUDENT PROGRESS

To support students and to help ensure that they move satisfactorily through the program, Supervisory Committees must meet on an annual basis to conduct a review of the student's progress: annual review meetings typically take place in **April and May**. The Supervisor is responsible for initiating and coordinating the preparation of an annual online progress report documenting the student's achievements in the past year and outlining plans for the coming year. This report is to be completed by the student and the supervisor: in the first year in particular, it is advisable for student and supervisor to meet around the

preparation of this report. Once complete, the report is discussed at a supervisory committee meeting. At the supervisory committee meeting, all parties review the student's progress and goals and objectives for the coming year. The Supervisor and committee members evaluate the student's progress. Any concerns regarding the student's progress will also be discussed in the supervisory committee meeting. These concerns and plans to address them will be indicated on this form. If the student's progress is deemed by the Committee to be unsatisfactory, it may recommend to the School of Social Work that the student be required to withdraw from the program. Progress reports are submitted to the School of Social Work by June 30 of each year. The School of Social Work will review the progress of all PhD students on an annual basis.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The Comprehensive Examination requires students to write a major paper that examines key issues in the students' proposed thesis research and that demonstrates the breadth of students' knowledge of debates and developments in contemporary scholarship in social work and social justice.

The comprehensive exam is situated in a critical review of literature but goes beyond this review in creating an original dialogue with the literature that sets up a position for the student's research. The comprehensive exam should demonstrate *analysis*, that is taking an idea apart and looking at the pieces; *synthesis*, that is how the idea relates to other ideas; and *evaluation*, which includes critical assessment of ideas. The student will develop their own theses and ideas based on the work of others but put together in a new way or applied differently. It is often the case that the comprehensive exam will spell out the contours of the theoretical frame which the student will take forward into the thesis proposal.

The precise relationship between the comprehensive examination and anticipated thesis research will vary from student to student. Students will consult with their Supervisors to define the focus and parameters of the comprehensive exam (inclusion of committee members may also be useful).

Students are encouraged to begin reading relevant literature in anticipation of the comprehensive proposal early in their program. An elective reading course with their Supervisor (or another instructor approved by the supervisor) may be useful in preparing for the proposal.

If following a four-year trajectory, proposals are typically submitted in September, and examinations are submitted by December of Year 2. Students may submit their proposal earlier than September, with the approval of their Supervisor. Some students, in consultation with their Supervisors, may choose to delay their exam until the second term of Year 2. It is anticipated that this

option will be used by students who need to complete Master's level courses in their first year of the program.

In any event the comprehensive examination requirement must be completed by the end of Year 2 as set out in the School of Graduate Studies regulations.

At the annual review of the student's progress at the end of Year 1, the student and the Supervisory Committee will discuss plans for the comprehensive examination and discuss when the proposal will likely be submitted. Students will submit a ten to twelve page double-spaced proposal and a bibliography (of about 50 articles and book chapters) for approval by the members of the student's Supervisory Committee, once the student's supervisor deems it ready for submission to the committee. Typically, the committee meets to discuss the proposal and any revisions required (2-3 weeks after having received the proposal). Once the proposal has been approved, the approval should be communicated to the Graduate Administrative Assistant. Upon the approval of the comprehensive exam proposal, the candidate will have three months to complete the comprehensive exam. (Arrangements can be made with the supervisor for a one week break for unexpected family emergencies or religious holiday observances; a different time-frame may be put in place for students with disability-related accommodations). Students will submit the completed examination (approximately 50-60 pages, plus references and appendices) to their Supervisory Committee.

Within three weeks of its submission, the committee members will review and evaluate the exam. Having completed the evaluation, the supervisor of the committee will arrange for a meeting of the student's committee. Suggested process for the meeting: the student takes 10 minutes to reflect on the exam; questions and feedback from each committee member; discussion of how feedback will be taken up in the next stages of work. The committee may ask the student to leave for a short time while a decision on the exam is made. The comprehensive examination is evaluated by the student's Supervisory Committee as "pass with distinction," "pass," or "fail."

If the exam is evaluated as a 'pass' or 'pass with distinction,' the Supervisory Committee will also discuss with the student the next steps in their doctoral research and the timeline for working on the thesis proposal.

Where the exam is evaluated as a fail by the majority of the Supervisory Committee members, all committee members will offer written comments towards supporting a re-write of the exam. One additional attempt is allowed. The Supervisor will play a role in ensuring that the feedback to the student is clear; this might involve consolidating feedback from the committee. The second examination (with the same 3-month writing period) will typically take place by the end of the next academic term. This second opportunity is given in

place of any 're-read' of a comprehensive exam, which is excluded from the Student Appeal Procedures (see [section 5.3 of the School of Graduate Studies Calendar](#)).

THESIS PROPOSAL

PhD students in the School of Social Work engage in a broad range of doctoral thesis topics and approaches. Following the successful completion of their comprehensive examination, students will prepare and submit their thesis proposal to their Supervisory Committee. The proposal will be drafted in consultation with the PhD Supervisor. It will make plain the purpose of the proposed focus of inquiry, relationships to existing work, and the intended contribution of the work to the advancement of knowledge in the field, social work and social justice more broadly. For a research-based thesis, the proposal should contain a review of the relevant literature, a succinct statement of the student's research problem and questions, their research design and methodology (including proposed research instruments, where appropriate), data analysis plan, and dissemination plan. The proposal should also consider ethical issues relating to their project. In the case that a student's dissertation will be a purely theoretical paper, the intended scope of the work will be outlined. Proposals will be 20-25 pages, double-spaced, in length, and will typically be submitted in year 3.

The student will submit a draft of their thesis proposal first to the PhD Supervisor who then has 3 weeks in which to read the draft. In discussion with the student, a decision will be made as to whether it is ready to go to the Supervisory Committee or requires revisions. Once deemed ready, the student submits the proposal to the Supervisory Committee, allowing 3 weeks for the proposal to be read. At the end of this time period, the Supervisor and Supervisory Committee members will meet with the student to discuss the proposal, ask questions and offer comment. A decision will be made as to whether the proposal is approved, approved with minor revisions or rejected.

- If the proposal has been approved, plans are outlined as to how the student will begin the work.
- If minor revisions are required by the Supervisory Committee, these will be outlined in written feedback from the Supervisor to the student. This documentation represents a contract between the student and the Supervisory Committee about the research. Once completed, the student will submit the revised proposal to the Supervisor for approval.
- A proposal deemed to require substantial changes will be rejected. A proposal may be rejected because the student did not demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the literature relating to the research

objectives, they do not have a good understanding of the proposed research method, or the proposed method was deemed by the committee to be unsound or unethical. A proposal for a theoretical dissertation may be rejected if it does not demonstrate a clear understanding of the theories being used and/or critiques of such. A proposal may also be rejected if it is judged to be unlikely to generate original knowledge relating to social work and social justice. If a proposal is rejected, all committee members will offer written comments towards supporting a rewrite of the proposal. The Supervisor will play a role in ensuring that the feedback to the student is clear; this might involve consolidating feedback from the Supervisory Committee. The revised proposal will be shared with the Supervisory Committee and discussed at a second meeting of the Supervisory Committee (taking place no later than 3 weeks after the revised proposal was shared with the Supervisory Committee). Students are allowed only one additional attempt to revise their thesis proposal – students whose proposals are rejected a second time will be required to withdraw from the program.

Students should thoroughly review the [Guide for Preparation of Master's and Doctoral Theses](#) before beginning the thesis writing process. Students may prepare and defend either a standard thesis (see sections 1.2 and 2.0) or a “sandwich” thesis (see sections 1.3 and 5.0) at their thesis defense. Students should also refer to the [Calendar](#) of the School of Graduate Studies (section 4.3) for detailed information on the doctoral thesis and oral defence.

The [Research Office for Administration, Development and Support](#) (ROADS) website provides helpful links to McMaster's policies and procedures for research copyright, ownership of student work, authorship, sandwich thesis, and intellectual property, etc.

PROCESS FOR THESIS DEFENCE AND GRADUATION FROM THE PHD PROGRAM

The student, Supervisor, and Committee members are typically in regular communication about planning for thesis defence. *It is important to establish that committee members judge the thesis to be ready for defence before initiating the process.*

External examiners: Supervisory committee members typically discuss a number of potential external examiners with students, however the supervisor is responsible for formally nominating external examiners and, in keeping with graduate studies regulations, the names of nominated potential examiners are not shared with the student. Examiners must be “arms length”, which means the student or Supervisor should not have collaborated on research with this person in the last six years or have plans to collaborate in the immediate future (typically within one year of date of defence). The examiner cannot be affiliated with the Supervisor's department in the last six years. There are no requirements for level of appointment (assistant, associate or full professor). See SGS Calendar, [Section 3.4.4](#), “Selection of the Examining Committee” for full details.

After student has emailed a copy of the pre-defence thesis to all members of the Supervisory Committee, their thesis must be uploaded to [iThenticate](#) by their primary Supervisor before they can initiate their PhD defence in Mosaic. According to [McMaster's Research Plagiarism Checking Policy](#), it is expected that all graduate theses shall be checked for plagiarism in compliance with this policy. PhD Supervisors will be prompted to confirm this in the Admin Tools system once their students initiate their defence. iThenticate can be used prior to final submission so that any issues can be addressed prior to final submission for examination.

Once student receives the go-ahead to initiate the defense, the student will access the ‘Student Centre’ portal in Mosaic to initiate the defence process

online. For more details, please refer to [Student Guide to Thesis Defence Process](#) Section 6.3, Submission of PhD Thesis Prior to Defence, and SGS Calendar, [Section 3.4.4](#).

Through the SGS automated system, the Supervisor is asked if they want to follow the **Standard or Accelerated defence stream**. The instructions below are for the general stream. **The most commonly used system in the School of Social Work is the accelerated stream**, see section 6.3 in the [Guide for the Preparation of Master's and Doctoral Theses](#), and this [Guide to the PhD Defense Process](#).

General defense stream: The student initiates the defence process online a *minimum* of two weeks before they expect to submit their pre-defence thesis (see [SGS Doctoral Degree](#) webpage and click on “defend” tab for helpful timeline chart).

The thesis initiation prompts an email to the Supervisor asking them to nominate the External Examiners. This is done electronically and includes the names of the examiners, contact information and a short paragraph as to why they are a good fit for the thesis defence. Other members of the Supervisory Committee are sent a copy of the form and asked to approve the nominated examiners.

Once approved, SGS takes over the process of inviting and confirming an External Examiner and getting the thesis to the examiner. In the interest of securing an External Examiner in a timely way, the External Examiner generally has just a few days to respond to the invitation before an invitation is sent to the next person proposed. The identity of the External Examiner is not released to the Supervisor, Supervisory Committee or student until the Examiner's report is received.

The week following the nomination of externals, the student proposes a defence date online and submits the pre-defence thesis. *Consultation about the date for the defence needs to happen among the Supervisory Committee prior to the student proposing a date*. This proposal of a date for defence prompts another email to the Supervisory Committee members. This email asks them to approve the date and to indicate whether or not the thesis is ready for defence. The External Examiner is not part of the process of setting a date so it would be wise for the committee to establish some alternative dates in the event the External Examiner is not available on the proposed date.

After the thesis is submitted, the External Examiner gets four weeks to read and respond. The Examiner's report comes in one or two weeks before the defence date.

“The external examiner must provide a report to the School of Graduate Studies with a written assessment of the thesis at least one week before the scheduled defence. Whether the assessment is positive or negative, the School of Graduate Studies will send the report of the external examiner to the supervisory committee. Depending on the external examiner’s report, different responses may be required. For more details, please see SGS Calendar, Section 3.4.4 Thesis, [Scheduling and Conducting the Oral Examination](#) (Oral Defence).

The proposed date for the defence is shared with the External Examiner once they are secured. The External Examiner can participate in person, via skype or conference call. If an External Examiner is not available on the date proposed the SGS thesis coordinator generally asks the committee for an alternative date. If it is not possible for the External to participate, SGS looks for an Internal Examiner to participate in the defence. There is still a report received from the External Examiner, but an Internal Examiner attends the defence in place of the External. An Internal Examiner would be a McMaster faculty member that can be from the School or another department as long as they are at arm’s length from the student’s research.

Timing of general defence process:

- Week One: nominate externals
- Week Two: submit thesis
- Week Three to Seven: external reviews thesis
- Week Eight: defence

Thesis defence is at minimum an eight-week process. It may take longer if there is a delay in any of the procedures outlined above.

The oral defence will be open to members of the university community and the public who wish to attend as observers, unless the student requests a closed defence. Typically, the thesis defence will not take more than two hours. In no case should it take more than three.

After a successful defense, the student must correct any errors detected by the readers to the satisfaction of the Supervisor and then submit an electronic copy to the School of Graduate Studies via [MacSphere](#) (see SGS Calendar, [Section 3.2.5 Submitting a Final and Approved Thesis](#)). Students typically submit their final thesis within four weeks of a successful defence.

Tuition is refunded based on the month the thesis is submitted to [MacSphere](#). The student accounts department waits for a 'clear to graduate' signal from SGS. It takes SGS 2-3 weeks to complete this from the date that the final thesis is uploaded. The reimbursement is prorated back to the date that the thesis is uploaded.

For detailed guidelines about preparing and defending your thesis, download the [Guide for the Preparation of Master's and Doctoral Theses](#).

UNIVERSITY TIME LIMITS ON COMPLETION OF THE PHD PROGRAM

Completion of the Ph.D. degree is typically limited to six years from initial registration in a regular doctoral program at McMaster. If a student does not manage to complete the degree requirements before the end of the time limit specified above, the Supervisor will receive an “out-of-time” letter from the University at the end of the student’s sixth year in the program. At this point the student’s Supervisor can request that the student be allowed to continue for one term, but this is only permissible if there is a clear and realistic plan for the student to defend their thesis by the end of that term. If this request is not made, upon consultation with the department and on its recommendation, the student will be shown as having been “withdrawn due to time limit”.

If a student (withdrawn due to time limit) has yet to complete course work, comprehensive and/or thesis proposal and wishes to return at a later date, they must make a formal request for readmission. Students should be aware that they may be required to complete additional course work. Once the student makes a formal request for readmission (must be within 5 years since withdrawal), the Graduate Administrative Assistant will provide them with a copy of the current School “Policy Concerning Students Applying for Re-Admission to the PhD Program”.

If the student (withdrawn due to time limit) has completed all degree requirements except the thesis component, and wishes to return at a later date for purpose of defence of their thesis, the student will make a formal request for readmission. In all cases, the department must first declare that the submitted thesis is ready for defence before the student will be readmitted. At the time of readmission, the student will be required to pay a tuition fee to defend. Please see [Fees & Payment](#) website, under “Tuition Fees”, click on “Graduate” tab, and “Graduate Program - PhD” tab to view current tuition rates – see note re. students in Term 13 (starting in 1st term of 5th Yr.) or greater pay the part-time tuition fee rate. Also applies for “readmission to defend”.

GRADUATE STUDENT PAYMENT INFORMATION

Please read the [Fees & Payment](#) information found on School of Graduate Studies webpage and click on tuition, supplementary fees, and payment methods tile for details.

Student Account

Once you have fully registered (which requires the activation of your MacID), you will be able to log on to Mosaic and view payments due, scholarship support payable to you (excluding research scholarships), and other financial activity on your student account. You may have to enroll in two places for **direct deposit** on Mosaic:

- For those receiving **scholarship support** (excluding research scholarship), McMaster has a **NEW** email refund system. Please read [e-transfer](#) instructions. If you have a credit (negative balance) showing on your account, request your refund by emailing refunds@mcmaster.ca. For more details, please consult [Registrar's website](#).
- For those receiving **payment for TA or "RA in lieu of TA"**, you must enrol in [HR Direct Deposit](#) and complete, *Contact & Deposit* and tax forms and submit via upload link provided by Faculty of Social Sciences HR coordinator.

If you have issues with your MacID or logging on to Mosaic, you will need to contact [University Technology Services \(UTS\)](#).

You will only be paid in mid-September if you are fully registered* by August 1st.

*Being fully registered means that you are enrolled in a McMaster course in all three terms (Fall, Winter & Spring/Summer). If you are not taking a core course or elective course (must be McMaster course) in any given term, then you need to add SGS-700 as a placeholder course.

Students should direct questions regarding their account and lifting a financial hold to student.billing@mcmaster.ca

Tuition Due: Due by the 25th of the first month of each term (September, January, May). See Registrar's Office for [payment methods](#) and [payment plan](#) enrolment dates (you can now choose to pay your fees in four monthly payments per term).

Scholarship and/or TA Funding Pay Schedule:

TA, RA in lieu of TA, Sessional Faculty Payments, Temp/Casual Payments: Paid biweekly starting 2nd week in September.

All Scholarship payments: Paid in a lump sum per term, 2nd week of Sep/Jan/May.

GSA Health & Dental Plan Coverage

- Students are automatically enrolled in insurances, and have the option of adding their spouse and/or dependent children. Students have the option to “opt-out” at the beginning of the academic year by contacting macgsa@mcmaster.ca and providing proof of similar insurance. See change of coverage period, and “[opt-out](#)” for full details.
- TAs are automatically enrolled in the [CUPE Unit 1 Dental Plan](#). If you have proof of similar coverage, please complete “opt-out” form found on their website at above link.
- University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP) is only available to international students.

APPENDIX I: SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY & DEADLINES

Scholarship	Doctoral	PostDoc	Notify Grad Chair & Supervisor Deadline	Internal School Deadline	SGS/ResearchNet/ Agency Deadline	Comment
Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships		Y	July (early)	August (early)	August (mid) Submit to SGS	Stage 1, LOI; SGS Approval Form needed
Can. Assoc. for Grad. (CAG) Studies Dissertation Award	Y		N/A – School nomination	N/A	March (mid) Submit to SGS	Dissertation accepted by SGS in previous calendar year
CGS-D: -Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR) Doctoral -Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Doctoral	Y		September (early)	SGS deadline is Oct 2 at 11:59pm	Submit via ResearchNet (CIHR) or SSHRC (Referees upload reference directly by late Sep)	For CIHR, SGS Approval Form; Confirmation of Scientific Area Form; and Confirmation of Number of Months Accumulated in Graduate Studies form needed
Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement	Y		August (mid)	September (early)	September (mid) Submit to SGS & via ResearchNet	
Ontario Graduate Scholarships (OGS) Incoming	Y			Automatically considered for central competition if applied for CGS-D		
Ontario Women's Health Scholars	Y	Y	October (mid)	November (early)	December (early) Submit to SGS (Referee submits appraisal directly)	
Internal Awards/Scholarships	Y		N/A	N/A	Aug & Jan (early)	
Travel Awards	Y		N/A	N/A	Open: January 1 Close: February 28	
SGS Bursaries and Academic Grants	Y		N/A	N/A	Open: August (early) Close: January (early)	Click on "Apply for Financial Aid" link and complete Student Profile in Mosaic Student Centre
Trudeau Foundation	Y		September (early)	October (mid)	November (early) Student submits directly to Foundation	Applicant uploads referee letters; School Chair submits supporting letter to SGS Scholarships.
Vanier Canada CGS (CIHR, SSHRC)	Y		July (mid)	August 8th	Sep 6 at 10am (Stage 1) Oct 5 10am (Stage 2) Oct 18 11:59pm Stage 2 endorsed	Stage 1, LOI (electronic; Grad Admin uploads) Stage 2, LOI (upload to MacDrive link) Stage 2 endorsed application complete (incl ref letters) on ResearchNet

Note: The agency guidelines and deadlines are subject to change at any time without prior notice. For complete and accurate information about external scholarship opportunities, applicants should always consult the external agency directly.

APPENDIX II: CENTRAL RESOURCES & SERVICES

- Thesis Completion
 - [Guidelines for Preparation](#)
- Progressing to Degree Completion
 - [Step-by-Step Guide to Write/Defend/Submit Thesis](#)
 - [Guide to Accessing Academic Advisement reports](#)
- Requesting Enrollment/Financial Letters in Mosaic Student Centre
 - Letters certifying enrollment by term; clear to graduate, and degree completion (after convocation date) may be found in [Mosaic](#) at Student Centre/Academics; then click on drop down menu, “Other Academic” choose “Enrolment/Financial Letters” and input last term that you attended.
- Policies and Regulations
 - [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
 - [Collective Agreement for TA/RA in lieu of TA](#)
 - [Leaves of Absence](#)
 - [Petition for Special Consideration](#)
 - click on “Petition for Special Consideration” tile
 - [Incomplete/Failing Grade](#)
 - [Student Code of Conduct](#)
 - [Student Appeals Process](#)
 - [Sexual Violence Policy](#)
 - [Research Integrity Policy](#)
- Information for International Students
 - [International Student Services](#)
- Advising and Counselling Services
 - [Student Wellness Centre](#)
 - [Student Success Centre](#)
 - [Student Accessibility Services](#)
 - [Ombuds Office](#)
 - [Chaplaincy Centre](#)
- Where to go for help
 - [School of Graduate Studies Student Resources, Forms & Guides](#)