



# Program Handbook

## PhD in Applied Health Sciences

Behavioural & Population Health  
Health Biosciences  
Social & Cultural Health Studies

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## About This Handbook

The content in this program handbook is accurate at the date of posting and is applicable for the current academic year. Program handbooks are updated annually, and students should ensure they are referring to the current version. Occasionally, changes to policy and program requirements do occur, so students should also check with the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, Faculty of Applied Health Sciences (FAHS) or Graduate Program Coordinator or the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGSPA) on critical matters where they are unsure.

This program handbook should be read in conjunction with general policies and guidelines as outlined in the [Brock University Graduate Calendar](#) and the [Brock Faculty Handbook](#).

# 1 DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

## 1.1 Introduction

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Program in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences (FAHS) centres on the development of knowledge through the systematic evaluation of evidence related to the health and well-being of individuals and groups. The goal of the PhD Program is to provide students with the fundamental educational background and rigorous research training to gain the skills and independence necessary to critically examine basic and practical issues related to the health sciences. Course work emphasizes a broad approach to the subject area, with attention to research techniques and the application of research methodology, current paradigms, and related conceptual, philosophical, and theoretical issues in health science research.

The Graduate faculty members involved with the Applied Health Sciences Doctoral program are grouped into three fields: *Behavioural and Population Health*; *Health Biosciences*; *Social and Cultural Health Studies*.

## 1.2 Mission and Goals of the Doctoral Program in Applied Health Sciences

The Graduate Program in Applied Health Sciences prepares students for careers as university and college faculty, research scientists, teachers, and public policy analysts. The overall goals of the program are to develop well-trained individuals who think creatively, are able to evaluate critically both their own work and that of others, and who can conduct research and scholarship at the forefront of their chosen fields.

Specific objectives of the PhD Program are as follows:

- to foster students' ability to do high-quality, scientifically rigorous research
- to expand students' understanding of concepts, theories, and research practices in their discipline
- to provide students with the knowledge base and analytical skills to undertake independent research in the various fields of health sciences
- to enhance students' abilities to apply and disseminate new knowledge and practices to colleagues, practitioners, policy makers and other professionals in healthsciences

The PhD Program in Applied Health Science offers the student an educational opportunity that emphasizes an individualized program of study, including mentorship-style learning and concentrated inquiry in an area of interest, which leads to the completion of a research thesis. The required course work provides students with in-depth knowledge of conceptual and theoretical issues, while fostering superior research skills and a thorough understanding of the scientific process. The optional course work specific to the student's research area complements the student's research focus and provides additional breadth of knowledge. Thus, students gain in-depth training, knowledge, and research experience through their thesis work, while also benefiting from a broad, cross-disciplinary approach and extensive small group learning. A PhD student must demonstrate the ability to conduct research independently with a program of research that is both original and makes a significant contribution to the student's field.

## **2 PROGRAM GOVERNANCE**

### **2.1 Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGSPA)**

The Graduate Program in the FAHS is overseen by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGSPA) and subject to review by the Senate Committee on Graduate Studies. The Senate Committee on Graduate Studies is responsible for considering and reporting to Senate on all matters relating to Graduate Studies, making recommendations to Senate on matters relating to graduate student admission, awards, curricula, examinations, promotion, and regulations with respect to Graduate academic matters.

### **2.2 Faculty of Applied Health Sciences (FAHS) Graduate Committee**

A Graduate Committee, comprised of faculty members representing the Departments of Health Sciences, Kinesiology, Nursing, Recreation and Leisure Studies, and Sport Management, manages the Graduate Program on behalf of the FAHS. This committee establishes FAHS policies and procedures regarding admissions, curricula, and examinations. As the Graduate Program Director (GPD), the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS, chairs the Graduate Committee as well as oversees and administers all day-to-day operations of the Graduate Program through the FAHS Graduate Studies Office.

## **3 PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

### **3.1 Admission Policy-General**

Admission to the PhD Program in the FAHS requires that the students fulfill admission requirements of both the Brock University FGSPA and the FAHS. Recommendation for admission comes from the FAHS Graduate Committee. Final approval and the offer for admission are by the FGSPA.

The Brock University FGSPA establishes regulations for admission, which specify the minimum entrance requirements. These requirements are designed to ensure that students entering a Graduate Program have both the capacity and preparation necessary to effectively undertake a program of study at the graduate level.

Possession of the minimum entrance requirements, however, does not guarantee admission. Because resource allocations play a significant role in the number of students that any graduate program can adequately accommodate, the University reserves the right to limit enrolment and to refuse admission to any student.

Brock University has a non-discriminatory policy to ensure against discrimination of applicants based on race, colour, national or ethnic origin, creed, sex, or sexuality.

It is the policy of Brock University that all students must submit a declaration on their application for admission and on their confirmation of registration attesting to their citizenship. Each student should be aware that documentation of citizenship may be required and that a penalty for a false statement is deregistration. In addition, any changes in status, e.g., from visa student to permanent resident or Canadian citizen, requires proof of the new status with appropriate document(s).

### **3.2 Academic Registration Requirements**

The PhD Program in Applied Health Sciences is normally offered on a full-time basis. Guidelines for course registration and residency requirements are provided to current and incoming students prior to Fall registration and are outlined in the "Academic Regulations" section of the current [Graduate Studies Calendar](#). Students will receive registration materials including the deadline date for registration by email.

### **3.3 Academic Regulations and University Policies**

Academic regulations and university policies are outlined in the Graduate Studies Calendar. All students are required to be aware of and adhere to these regulations and policies. In the event of a change in policies, students shall be guided by those policies that were in effect at the time of their entry to the degree program. See Academic Regulations and University Policies within the [Graduate Studies Calendar](#).

### **3.4 Fees**

The fee structure of the degree programs offered through FAHS are outlined by Brock University and the FGSPA. Students should consult the [Student Accounts & Financial Aid](#) website and the information provided in their registration package for the most current fee scale for their program of interest. Graduate students can view their funding package on the Student Funding page (GradStuFunding) in their Brock student portal.

### **3.5 Financial Assistance**

Many graduate students require financial assistance to pursue their studies. Graduate students in the FAHS are eligible for a variety of scholarships, fellowships, and awards administered by Brock University and the Provincial and Federal Governments (e.g., NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR, OGS). For a listing of scholarships/awards available to graduate students, see the FGSPA [Awards and Scholarships website](#).

The FAHS attempts to offer financial support, where possible, in the form of research fellowship, research assistantship and/or teaching assistantships.

The supervisor will normally provide a minimum of \$5000/year in the four-year funded period through a research fellowship and/or research assistantship. This funding is at the discretion of the supervisor. A research fellowship has no expectation of additional work to be completed by the student, outside of their thesis research. A research assistantship is employment, with a student completing work outside of the thesis research.

As per the [Faculty Handbook, Section 3B, Article 7.1. e](#), full-time graduate students "must limit their paid University employment to a maximum of 520 hours per year, with a maximum of 240 hours per academic term". This includes all paid employment on campus including teaching and research assistantships". While the FAHS cannot guarantee the maximum number of hours to each student, the FAHS typically offers PhD students 120 hours per term (Fall and Winter with possibility of Spring/Summer) based on the availability of resources and student qualifications. Students can apply for available assistantship/instructor positions within the faculty. A listing of open positions and information on how to apply can be found on the [Career Opportunities](#) website.

All financial support is subject to budgetary availability each year.

## 4 PROGRAM DETAILS

### 4.1 Overview

It is the intent of the PhD Program in the FAHS to broaden the students' level of understanding of their chosen discipline and provide them with the necessary scholarly and technical research skills to pursue a high-quality research project culminating in the presentation of a formal written thesis and an oral defence of the thesis. The program emphasizes a multidisciplinary approach that fosters students' appreciation of theories and research developments in the various disciplines represented in the program, sharpens critical thinking skills, and expands analytical competence both within an interest area as well as outside the realm of a particular discipline.

Students in the PhD Program pursue a course of study in one of the following fields: *Behavioural and Population Health; Health Biosciences; Social and Cultural Health Studies*. Each of the three streams is designed as a four-year program involving a combination of course work (see Section 4.4.1), and a focused program of research. The streams are highly flexible and designed to enable each student to collaborate individually with a supervisor and Supervisory Committee to construct a program of study and research that meets the students' interests and needs. Lastly, the development of a program of research studies, the writing of a thesis, and the defence of the thesis to an Examination Committee consisting of both an External and an Internal Examiner are common elements for all streams.

### 4.2 Residency Requirements and Recommended Timelines

After registration, full-time PhD students must maintain continuous registration until all degree requirements have been fulfilled. The residency requirement of a Graduate degree program is the minimum number of terms in which the student must be registered on a full-time basis. The residency requirement for the PhD Program in the FAHS is nine terms (three years) of full-time registration.

Students must maintain adequate progress towards degree completion to remain eligible for further enrolment and financial support. Students must maintain continuous registration each term in AHSC 7F90 from the time of initial admission until degree requirements are complete. The program is designed to be completed in four years and offers a funding package for four years. All data collection for the thesis should be completed no later than the end of the third year after initial registration. Six months should be allowed for analysis of data and thesis writing. There are maximum time limits for the completion of Graduate Programs. Doctoral students must complete all degree requirements within six years from the date of first registration.

Application for extension beyond these terms can be made to the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS, and must be approved by the Brock University FGSPA. Recommended timelines for completing various "landmarks" leading to degree completion are presented via the Timeline for Completion of the PhD in Applied Health Sciences Degree (**Appendix 1**). To document progress toward their degree, students will receive an email from the FGSPA to complete the online PhD Student Progress Report once every year. Students are also advised to have one Supervisory Committee meeting per term.

### 4.3 Original Research and Thesis

#### 4.3.1 Selection of a Supervisor

All graduate students must have a supervisor who oversees their programs of study including

selection of courses, development and defence of the research proposal, progress through ethics review, conduct of research, and the writing and defence of the thesis. In accordance with Senate regulations, it is the responsibility of the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS, to ensure continuity of graduate student supervision.

Students should be aware that only members of the FAHS or Participating Faculty who are appointed to the Graduate Program can supervise graduate students. Furthermore, acceptance of a graduate student for supervision is the prerogative of the Faculty member and students are not usually admitted to the Graduate Program unless a Faculty member has expressed interest in supervising their studies. When approached by a student, potential supervisors are expected to inform the student of their availability, which includes plans for sabbaticals or other planned leave for the student's normal period of study. Note: During discussions regarding any future supervisor-student relationship, Faculty members must not make any promises regarding admission into the Graduate Program.

The ideal process for the matching of student and supervisor is one in which the interests of both student and supervisor are represented well and expressed deliberately. This implies that both would have to declare an interest in collaborating with each other. Initiation of the PhD Student Progress Report Form formally establishes a contract between the student and the supervisor regarding:

- 1) The expected steps and suggested timelines to be followed by the student, and
- 2) The supervisor's obligations to the student. Students may change supervisors through notification in writing to, and approval from, the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS (see Section 4.3.3). Students are not permitted to continue in the program for more than six months without a designated supervisor.

#### ***4.3.2 Regular Meetings of Student and Supervisor***

It is difficult to conceive a successful collaboration between student and supervisor without effective, regular consultation. This means that there should be regular meetings between the student and Supervisory Committee (including supervisor) during all stages of the program including course work, research, writing and defence of the thesis. Regular consultation also implies that students have the right of reasonable access to their supervisors. Under normal circumstances, students should be able to expect to have written work (of reasonable length) returned to them with the supervisor's comments within two weeks after it was submitted. If this does not happen, the student should contact the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS, for consultation.

The student and supervisor should establish and maintain a regular schedule of meetings; however, the frequency of meetings at any given time depends on the stage and the nature of the research project.

#### ***4.3.3 Structure of the Supervisory Committee***

A Supervisory Committee that includes the supervisor will oversee a student's thesis research program. The student's Supervisory Committee advises the student specifically on the research proposal, conduct of the research, and write-up of the thesis. The Supervisory Committee will also examine the student at the Comprehensive Examination (See Section 4.5), Thesis Proposal Defence (See Section 4.6) and Internal Assessment Meeting and Final Oral Examination of the thesis (See Section 4.7).

By the end of the second term, the supervisor, in consultation with the student, recommends the members of the Supervisory Committee to the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS, who confirms their appointment to a particular Supervisory Committee. The Supervisory Committee must include:

- 1) The supervisor, who is a FAHS Faculty member or Participating Faculty, appointed to the FAHS Graduate Program, and is approved for inclusion in the PhD supervisory list.
- 2) Three Supervisory Committee members, who, in addition to the supervisor, are FAHS Faculty members appointed to the FAHS Graduate Program and hold the rank of Assistant Professor or higher as per the following:
  - If the supervisor is a FAHS Faculty member, one Supervisory Committee member who can be but need not be from the FAHS but holds a Doctoral degree (Note: A committee member who does not hold an academic appointment at Brock University must be approved by the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS).
  - If the supervisor is a Participating Faculty member, all the other Supervisory Committee members are FAHS tenure track or tenured faculty.
  - If there is co-supervision, two additional FAHS Faculty members are required to form a Supervisory Committee.

If a Supervisory Committee member should become unavailable (e.g., goes on sabbatical, leaves the University, etc.), the student, in consultation with their supervisor, should seek to replace this individual.

If a student's graduate supervisor leaves Brock University during the student's program, the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS has the responsibility to ensure that the student can exercise one of the following options:

1. Remain at Brock and change supervisor and if appropriate change thesis topic.
2. Remain at Brock and in the event that the supervisor has acquired adjunct status within a Department at Brock University, complete the existing thesis, adding a FAHS faculty member appointed to the FAHS Graduate Program as co-supervisor to the committee.
3. Remain at Brock and complete the existing thesis even though the appropriate expertise may not be available at Brock for supervision. In this case, the Supervisory Committee may seek advice from experts off campus or may arrange for the student to work off campus. It will be the responsibility of the Supervisory Committee (augmented, if necessary, by outside expertise) to advise the student on all matters regarding thesis preparation. The student is not precluded from seeking advice from the former Brock faculty member, but the former Brock faculty member has no privileged position with respect to the thesis. The Supervisory Committee will take precedence in all cases.
4. Apply to transfer to the university to which the student's former supervisor has moved.

If either the graduate student or supervisor wishes to initiate a change in supervision as described 1) and 2) above, it must be presented in writing with explanation to the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS for approval. Any special arrangements described in 3) or 4) above must be approved by the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS.

#### **4.4 Degree Requirements**

The PhD in Applied Health Sciences is designed as a four-year program involving a combination of course work (2.0 Full Course Equivalents - FCE), a Comprehensive Examination, including both written and oral components, the conduct of an original research program, and the writing and subsequent defence of a thesis. Appendix 1 of this Handbook describes the expected progression route and relative time sequence for students enrolled in the Doctoral degree program in Applied Health Sciences.

Details regarding coursework requirements, the comprehensive examination process, and the research component of the program are provided below.

##### **4.4.1 Coursework Requirements**

All course offerings in the Graduate Program are offered by full-time faculty. All courses in the course bank can be taken by PhD students and are open to other graduate students in the Brock FGSPA. Undergraduate courses are not taken for credit as part of the requirements for the PhD degree. Students must take 2 half-credit courses from the list of required courses and 2 optional graduate (5PXX or 7PXX) level half-credit courses. In addition, the student must complete both the oral and written components of the Comprehensive Examination, formally defend the Thesis Proposal, conduct research, and write the thesis. The student must then present the thesis to the Supervisory Committee for the Internal Thesis Assessment and finally defend it in a University Oral Defence. Specific course requirements include:

##### **A. Required Courses**

- i) Each student must complete AHSC 7P01 - PhD Seminar in Applied Health Sciences
- ii) Each student must select one of the following 0.5 FCE courses:
  - AHSC 7P17 - Advanced Qualitative Analysis
  - AHSC 7P27 - Advanced Biostatistics in Applied Health Sciences Research

##### **B. Elective Courses**

Each student must complete a minimum of 1.0 FCE elective courses with at least 0.5 FCE being selected from the program's course bank (see below), and the other 0.5 FCE being selected from the graduate level course offerings across the FGSPA, including the courses offered by the FAHS or by another Ontario University, as approved by the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS.

Notes:

- 1) If a student has already taken a required graduate course during the Master's degree, the student must replace the required course with another graduate level course as approved by the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS.
- 2) If a student has already taken a graduate level statistics or research methods course equivalent to AHSC 7P17 or 7P27 during the Master's degree, the student may substitute an additional graduate level course as approved by the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS.
- 3) The 2.0 FCE requirements are a minimum for the program; a student's

Supervisory Committee may recommend that a student needs additional course work to develop an area of expertise.

#### **4.4.2 Course Registration**

Students must register each term using the on-line registration system. To remain enrolled in the PhD program, students must register each term in AHSC 7F90, thesis course until the completion of the PhD degree. For information regarding the on-line registration system, visit the FGSPA website <https://brocku.ca/graduate-studies/current-students/registration/>.

#### **4.4.3 Grading**

Evaluation procedures for courses will follow the current academic regulations for Graduate Studies at Brock University. A student must achieve and maintain satisfactory academic performance, with a standing of at least B in graduate level courses. Grades A+, A and B, and C are passing grades, but graduate credit will only be given for grades A+, A and B.

#### **4.4.4 Transfer of Credits**

Students admitted to the PhD Program may be granted transfer credits, at the time of admission, to a maximum of one-third of the graduate degree course requirements, for graduate courses completed at another university. The transfer of these credits is approved by the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS.

Only graduate courses completed within the last five years with a grade of B+ or higher will be considered for transfer. Credit will not be granted for courses that have been credited toward another degree or diploma at Brock or another university.

Students must submit official transcripts, course descriptions, and other supporting documentation before consideration will be given to granting transfer credits. Students admitted as transfer students must be in good standing with their previous institution and eligible to enroll at that institution at the time of admission to Brock.

### **4.5 Comprehensive Examination**

The purpose of the Comprehensive Examination is to provide the student with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to synthesize current research, discuss strengths and weaknesses of area-specific research methodology and design, and to engage in knowledgeable academic discourse with other individuals in the chosen field of study. The comprehensive examination process is typically completed in a period of 3 to 4 months - this includes the time from receipt of the list of readings to completing the written and oral components.

#### **4.5.1 Responsibilities of the Student**

The student is responsible for initiating a meeting with their supervisor no less than six months prior to the time when they wish to take their Comprehensive Examination.

The student is responsible for informing the Supervisory Committee of their intent to take their Comprehensive Examination no less than four months prior to the anticipated date.

Through a collaborative process, the student and each Examiner should develop an outline of the respective knowledge expectations and the associated reading materials (i.e.,

reading list). A reading list should be developed regardless of the format chosen. The student and supervisor should complete this process with each Examiner, preferably during a committee meeting to allow a discussion among the student and all committee members, no less than three months prior to the agreed upon date of the written component of the Examination.

The **supervisor** must then formalize the date with the FAHS Graduate Office to ensure that an examination room is available and that all Supervisory Committee members can be present for the oral examination.

#### *4.5.2 Responsibilities of the Examination Committee*

The Examination Committee will be comprised of the four faculty members that make up the Advisory Committee.

The Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS (or designate), will serve as the Chair.

The supervisor must submit the assigned reading list a minimum of three months prior to completing the written portion of the comprehensive examination.

For the four-question format (refer to 4.5.3) these must be submitted to the FAHS Graduate office two weeks prior to the written examination date. The FAHS Graduate office will then be responsible for administering the questions to the student for the written component of the comprehensive examination.

#### *4.5.3 Conduct and Format of Comprehensive Examination*

The Comprehensive Examination is to be conducted upon successful completion of no less than 75% of the student's course work and within the first 18 months of the student's enrolment in the program. At the time of taking the Comprehensive Examination, the student should have no standing deferred or incomplete grades, and the Comprehensive Examination must be successfully completed prior to the defence of the Research Proposal.

The Comprehensive Examination will consist of both Written and Oral components. The format of the Written exam must be agreed upon by all members of the Examination Committee. All written responses must be submitted electronically to the FAHS Graduate Office. The Written component of the Comprehensive Examination may take one of the following formats.

#### **Note:**

Throughout the process, examination committee members and students are encouraged to schedule regular 'check-in' meetings (see Appendix 2 for the "Tips" document). These meetings can be used to support students as they prepare for the comprehensive examination process; clarify questions about examination material/readings and examination expectations. Meetings with examination committee members will not include providing direct feedback on written exams, including both draft and final versions of responses prior to the student's submission.

1. A total of four questions, of which three must be answered within an examination room at Brock University. Responses to each question are to be written within a six to eight-hour time frame, or as otherwise agreed by the Examination Committee and approved by the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS. There is no page limit for the responses. The student submits the responses to the FAHS Graduate Office electronically. The student is eligible to receive their responses to the answered questions.

2. A total of four questions, of which three must be answered in a take home format. Responses to the three questions are to be written within 72 hours of receipt of the questions, or as otherwise agreed by the Examination Committee and approved by the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS. There is no page limit for the responses. The student submits the responses to the FAHS Graduate Office electronically.

3. A Tri-Council grant application. The student and the Examination Committee must decide on the specific Tri-Council funding agency (i.e., SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR) to employ as the written comprehensive component. Submission rules and regulations of the specific Tri-Council agency, as well as reviewer criteria should be used as assessment guidelines regarding the quality of the written component. Assessment criteria and expectations including page or word limit and referencing format must be discussed with the student and documented by the Examination Committee upon choosing this option. The student submits the grant application to the FAHS Graduate Office electronically.

4. A review paper of which the topic must be decided upon in consultation with the Examination Committee and encompasses the areas of expertise of each Examination Committee member. Assessment criteria and expectations including page or word limit and referencing format must be discussed with the student and documented by the Examination Committee choosing this option. As well, although this paper maybe publishable, it will not be a component of the thesis document. The student submits the review paper to the FAHS Graduate Office electronically. For guidance on types of reviews that fit within the time frame for the comprehensive examination, please refer to the summary in Appendix 3.

5. A total of three research/scholarly or creative works in a take home format. Each of the three research/scholarly or creative works are to be written within four months of receipt of research topics, or as otherwise agreed by the Examination Committee and approved by the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS. Assessment criteria and expectations must be discussed with the student and documented by the Examination Committee upon choosing this option. One research/scholarly or creative work is typically methods-related, while the other two are topics that must be decided upon in consultation with the Examination Committee (e.g. salient bodies of literature, theoretical approaches). If in a written format (e.g., traditional research paper), the responses to each research/scholarly paper should be no longer than 6,000 words, double-spaced, excluding references. If in a creative works format, the representation form and output must be decided upon in consultation with the Examination Committee (e.g. art-based forms of representation, decolonizing methodologies). The responses must be prepared according to guidelines of sole authorship in the discipline. The student will submit the responses to the FAHS Graduate Office electronically if in written format or as agreed upon by the committee and Associate Dean if in a creative works format.

Any deviation from choices 1 through 5 above must be agreed upon by all members of the Examination Committee and receive approval by the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS.

#### **4.5.4 Evaluation of Written Comprehensive Examination**

Responses to the Written Examination questions (see Section 4.5.3 #1. and #2.) will be graded on a PASS/UNSUCCESSFUL basis by the individual Examination Committee member who developed the question. A PASS (i.e., a grade of no less than a B- (70%) as described in the Graduate Studies Calendar) is required on EACH of the three questions to PASS the Written component of the Comprehensive Examination.

Evaluation of the Tri-Council grant proposal or review paper (see Section 4.5.3 #3. and #4.) must be done by each Examination Committee member. Documented assessment criteria should be used to assess the student's written work. A PASS (i.e., a grade of no less than a B- (70%) as described in the Graduate Studies Calendar) is required from each of the four Examination Committee members to PASS the Written component of the Comprehensive Examination.

It is the responsibility of each Examiner to provide their evaluation of the student's response no more than 72 business hours following completion of the Examination, to both the student's supervisor and to the FAHS Graduate Office. The student should be notified of the results of the Written component of the Examination by the FAHS Graduate Office no later than 48 hours prior to the Oral examination.

#### **Failure to Successfully Complete the Written Examination:**

When a student fails to successfully complete the Written component of the Comprehensive Examination, they will be eligible to retake the Written component within six months. In conjunction with the Examination Committee, the student should identify the content weaknesses and develop a plan (course work, supplementary reading, etc.) to address deficiencies in their knowledge base. The second examination will consist of the same content areas, but not necessarily the same format or questions, and should be conducted whenever possible by the same Examination Committee. Failure to successfully complete the Written component of the Examination after two attempts will result in the student's withdrawal from the PhD Program.

#### **4.5.5 Procedure for Oral Comprehensive Examination**

The Oral component of the Comprehensive Examination will be conducted within five business days of successful completion of the Written Examination. **Please note, there is no oral presentation by the student at the start of the Oral Comprehensive Examination.** The Examination will be approximately three hours in duration and will consist of a minimum of two rounds of questioning. All members of the Examination Committee must be present.

For students who choose the question format (answer three of four questions), they will respond first to the question which was not answered during the Written Examination, with subsequent questions being directed towards further clarification/enhancement of the Written Examination responses (Round 1). Round 2 follows with more in-depth exploration of topics within the body of knowledge in the area of expertise. The Examination Committee may deem subsequent rounds of questioning necessary.

As for students that chose to complete a Tri-Council grant application or empirical paper, Round 1 question will focus on further clarification/enhancement of the Written Examination, while Round 2 will consist of more in-depth exploration of topics within the body of knowledge in the area of expertise. The Examination Committee may deem subsequent rounds of questioning necessary. The Chair will record the questions being asked.

#### **4.5.6 Evaluation of Oral Comprehensive Examination**

Responses to the Oral Examination questions will be graded on a PASS or UNSUCCESSFUL basis by each member of the Examination Committee. To successfully complete the Oral component of the Comprehensive Examination, the student must receive a passing grade (i.e., a grade of no less than a B- (70%) as described in the Graduate Studies Calendar) from each of the four Examination Committee members. The Examination Committee will make an immediate evaluation at the *in-camera* meeting that follows the Oral Examination. If the student is not successful at the Oral Examination, a decision about re-examination and the timeframe for doing so (within 6 months) is also established at this meeting. A second unsuccessful examination will lead to the student's automatic withdrawal from the program.

#### **4.6 Research Proposal**

In addition to the evaluation associated with the required course work and Comprehensive Examination, PhD degree students are formally evaluated at two stages during the research phase of their program. The first of these evaluations involves the presentation and defence of the Research Proposal. This evaluation should take place after the student, in consultation with their supervisor and Supervisory Committee, has developed a research plan and, typically, prior to submission of a project for ethics review.

The aims of the Research Proposal are:

- (a) To provide the student with the opportunity to present, discuss and defend the research plan,
- (b) To ensure that the proposed research design and methodology are consistent with standardized practice in the student's area of study,
- (c) To examine whether the methods chosen will enable the student to develop a scholarly piece of research,
- (d) To obtain feedback on the research plan and readiness to proceed with the research.

The Proposal Defence should be within 24 months of enrolment in the PhD program.

##### **4.6.1 Conduct and Evaluation of Research Proposal Defence**

The specific procedures used for the Proposal Defence will be identical to those used for the final Thesis Defence, which are outlined in Section 4.8.

The Proposal Defence should also be seen as an opportunity for the student to give and receive feedback so that weaknesses can be identified and addressed in preparation for the submission to the appropriate Research Ethics Review Committee. Finally, while it is important that this evaluation be viewed as a positive opportunity for scholarly exchange and discussion of the topic between the student, the Supervisory Committee, and other members of the academic community, it must also be recognized that the Proposal Defence is an evaluation of the student's readiness to move further with the research phase of the degree. It provides an opportunity for the student to update the Supervisory Committee on other aspects of the student's progress (i.e., coursework) and academic preparation (i.e., conference attendance, teaching experience, etc.).

##### **4.6.2 Format of the Research Proposal Defence**

This defence will be scheduled for three hours and will be chaired by the Associate Dean,

Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS (or designate). All members of the Supervisory Committee must be present at this meeting.

The following materials must be received by the FAHS Graduate Office for distribution to all members of the Supervisory Committee a minimum of two weeks prior to the Proposal Defence:

- 1) Research proposal document, and
- 2) An up-to-date CV.

In the Proposal Defence, the student will verbally present:

- 1) A proposed timeline for course work and research activities  
(*approximately 5 minutes*)
- 2) An overview of any teaching experience, research progress, publications, conference presentations, or other scholarly or academic activities such as seminar attendance, journal club participation, student council activities, etc. (*approximately 5 minutes*)
- 3) A summary of their academic progress to date (*approximately 5 minutes*)
- 4) Their research proposal, including introduction, objectives, hypotheses, methods, proposed statistical or data analyses (*approximately 15-20 minutes*)

The format of the defence following the presentation will involve two rounds of questions, with each Examiner questioning the student for 10-12 minutes in each round. The Examiners may request a third round if they feel it is necessary. The Chair will record the questions being asked and note any issues or areas that need to be addressed regarding the research and/or the thesis.

#### **4.6.3 Evaluation of the Proposal Defence**

The student will be evaluated on the following components of the proposal:

- **Written Research Proposal.** It is advisable that the Proposal be evaluated using criteria related to the theoretical framework, the scope, scientific vigor, feasibility and appropriateness of the proposed methods so that the student is aware of the expectations of the various Supervisory Committee members and so that specific suggestions regarding content, timelines, proposed methodology, and analysis can be incorporated into the planning of the work.
- **Presentation.** The presentation should be evaluated based on both content and style. It is important that the student be made aware of features associated with good scientific presentation, style, and format. Feedback from the presentation should serve to better prepare the student for the presentation associated with the final University Oral Thesis Defence.
- **Defence of the Proposal.** The student should be evaluated on their ability to defend the scientific merit of the study, to clearly explain the rationale and need for the study based on existing literature, and to discuss the strengths/potential weakness of the research questions, experimental design, methods, and data analysis of the study. Whenever possible, the format of questioning and the type of questions should be similar to what would occur at the final University Oral Thesis Defence.

#### *4.6.4 Notification of the Student and Record of Evaluation/Completion*

Upon completion of the questioning of the student, the Supervisory Committee meets in-camera to discuss the thesis proposal to ascertain what remains to be done before the student can apply for ethics approval (if applicable), and subsequent to ethics approval (if applicable), begin data collection. Both verbal and written follow-up instructions should be provided to the student.

In the instance when the proposal is deemed “unsatisfactory”, a second Proposal Defence must be scheduled after the student has had an opportunity to follow-up with each Supervisory Committee member. It is the supervisor’s responsibility to ensure that the changes being made to the proposal are in accordance with the requirements of the Supervisory Committee. A second “unsatisfactory” Proposal Defence will result in the student’s withdrawal from the PhD Program.

#### *4.6.5 Admission to Doctoral Candidacy*

As outlined in the Graduate Academic Regulations [University Faculty Handbook, Section 3-B, 9.6](#), if the Supervisor and Supervisory Committee approves that the student has met all the candidacy requirements, such as all course requirements, comprehensive examination and successfully defending their proposal, the student will be admitted to candidacy. The FAHS Graduate office will require the Supervisor to sign the PhD Candidacy Approval form to forward to the FGSPA to update the student’s record.

#### *4.6.6 Original Research and Thesis*

The purpose of the research and thesis in the PhD program is to give the student an opportunity to undertake advanced research in a significant problem in the field of health science. The student shall present a thesis embodying the results of original investigation, which has been conducted by the student. The thesis shall constitute a significant contribution to the knowledge of the field and must be based on original research conducted while registered in the PhD program. The results of the thesis should be publishable, either in whole or in part, by the student as first author. Upon successful completion of the thesis, the student will be qualified to conduct original, authoritative, independent research.

Appropriate clearance by [Brock University’s Research Ethics Board](#) or [Animal Ethics Committee](#) must be obtained before data collection can begin. Submission of ethics proposals is typically concurrent with or following the Thesis Proposal.

When the supervisor and Supervisory Committee believes a defensible thesis research document has been written, the formal Internal Assessment Meeting is scheduled to discuss the thesis (see Section 4.7.4 for information regarding the Internal Assessment Meeting). If the thesis passes this Internal Assessment meeting, a formal University Defence with External and Internal Examiners is scheduled. Successful completion of the University Defence, in conjunction with the fulfillment of the other degree requirements, constitutes completion of the PhD program.

#### *4.6.7 Writing of the Thesis*

Students are strongly urged to submit chapters to their supervisor throughout the writing process. This will reduce the chance of the thesis moving too far in an inappropriate direction. Depending on the nature of the research, it is often wise to submit selected chapters to appropriate members of the Supervisory Committee as well.

## 4.7 Thesis Completion and Internal Assessment

Once the student has a completed thesis and has received approval from their Supervisory Committee to proceed to the Internal Assessment Meeting, the student and/or supervisor should contact the FAHS Graduate Studies Office to arrange a date and time for the meeting. **The student and all members of the Supervisory Committee must be present at the Internal Assessment Meeting.**

### 4.7.1 Internal Assessment Meeting

Before a Thesis Defence can be requested, the Supervisory Committee must ascertain the student's readiness to successfully defend what is anticipated to be a final version of the thesis. This version of the thesis will have been reviewed by each of the committee members with their respective feedback incorporated. This evaluation occurs via an Internal Assessment Meeting, which should take place a minimum of two months before the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS, requests the University Oral Defence to ensure sufficient time for any revisions to the thesis. This meeting is not public. The final version of the thesis must be submitted to the FAHS Office of Graduate Studies no less than two weeks prior to the Internal Assessment Meeting for circulation to the Supervisory Committee.

### 4.7.2 Roles and Responsibilities Prior to the Internal Assessment Meeting

Student:

- The student must ensure that the thesis is complete and follows the format guidelines specified by the FGSPA and meets the [FGS Thesis Format Specifications](#).
- The student must ensure that all members of the Supervisory Committee and the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS, receive a copy of the thesis at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting.

Supervisory Committee:

- The thesis must be reviewed and approved, with feedback incorporated, by all Supervisory Committee members before the meeting is scheduled.

FAHS Graduate Office:

- After being notified by the supervisor that the student is prepared to progress to the Internal Assessment Meeting, the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS, will ensure that the student has completed all other degree and course requirements. (*NOTE: the Internal Assessment Meeting cannot be scheduled if there are any outstanding grades.*)
- The Internal Assessment Meeting is chaired by the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS, or designate (under extenuating circumstances the designate may be the supervisor).
- The FAHS Graduate Office will notify all members of the Supervisory Committee of the scheduled date and time of the Internal Assessment Meeting.
- Finally, the FAHS Graduate Office will arrange the booking of a room.

### 4.7.3 Roles and Responsibilities at the Internal Assessment Meeting

The Assessment Committee consists of the Supervisory Committee (supervisor and three appointed committee members). All supervisory committee must be present at the Internal Assessment meeting. Voting members of the Assessment Committee include the Supervisory Committee members.

Chair of the Internal Assessment Committee:

- The Chair is responsible for verifying that there has been satisfactory completion of all degree requirements and that the appropriate documentation is available to confirm completion of the degree requirements.
- The Chair is responsible for verifying that all members of the Supervisory Committee have read the thesis and have enough knowledge of the thesis to examine the student and will not abstain from the voting based on a lack of knowledge.
- The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the examination is conducted properly, within the guidelines and timelines outlined in this document (see Section 4.7.4).
- The Chair, who is expected to exercise full control over the examination, does not participate directly in the assessment process (unless the supervisor acts as the Chair).

Members of the Assessment Committee:

- The specific responsibilities of the committee are to examine the student on the content and implications of the thesis, to assess whether the thesis meets the proper standards of scholarship, and to vote on whether the thesis is acceptable, and that the student and thesis are ready to proceed to the University Oral Defence.
- At the end of the meeting, the Assessment Committee will also propose a list of three potential External Examiners, three potential Internal Examiners, and a minimum of 3 potential examination dates.
- The supervisor must complete the Appointment of External Examiner and Internal Examiner forms and submit both forms to the FAHS Graduate Office who will then submit it to the FGSPA. Note that this must occur at least 10-12 weeks before the expected date of the University Oral Defence. The FGSPA will formally contact and invite the External Examiner and send the completed thesis to the External Examiner.

Student:

- The PhD student will present and defend the thesis as described below.

#### *4.7.4 Format of the Internal Assessment Meeting*

All members of the Assessment Committee will assemble at the scheduled location 10 minutes before the planned start of the defence. Currently, the procedures for the examination are reviewed by the Chair of the Assessment Committee.

These procedures include:

- The Chair confirms that all members of the Supervisory Committee are present. It is the responsibility of the Chair to determine whether to delay the assessment or to postpone it to another date if all the Supervisory Committee members are not present.
- The Chair reports on the completion of all course requirements.
- The Chair confirms that each member of the Assessment Committee has read the thesis and has enough knowledge of the thesis to form a judgment as to its acceptability; this ensures that there will be no abstentions in voting on the grounds of ignorance of the contents of the thesis.
- The Chair discusses with the Assessment Committee the preferred format

of the meeting, and the time allotment.

- The Chair reminds the Assessment Committee of the scope of the examination, specifically that the student is to be judged on both the content of the thesis and the oral presentation.

Conduct of the Examination:

- Once the Assessment Committee completes its pre-examination meeting, the room will be opened to the student.
- The Chair will make the introductions, explain the procedures to be followed, and invite the student to begin their presentation. The presentation can be a maximum of 35-minutes and summarizes the research and conclusions.
- This presentation will be followed by a brief discussion and/or comments and questions.
- As part of the dialogue of learning and as a collegial courtesy, the student is given an opportunity to make final remarks or address questions for clarification to the members of the Assessment Committee. Once the discussion period is complete, the Chair asks the student to retire while the Assessment Committee makes its deliberations.

#### **4.7.5 Evaluation of Thesis**

**Voting.** Prior to voting, both the thesis and the presentation of the thesis should be discussed. As the decision concerns the readiness of both the document and the student for the University Oral Thesis Defence, the decision is essentially PASS or UNSUCCESSFUL. With either decision, the Assessment Committee makes recommendations concerning the presentation, necessary changes to the document, and further preparation that should be undertaken by the student.

### **4.8 Procedures for Final Defence of the PhD Thesis**

Students are advised to use the following timetable to work backwards from the tentative date of the University Oral Defence. To arrange for an University Oral Defence, it is critical that the thesis be ready and submitted to the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS ten to twelve weeks prior to the Thesis Defence. Upon receiving the thesis, the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS, submits a Supervisory Committee Approval of Thesis Form to FGSPA, determines an official examination date for FGSPA approval, and suggests the names of the three prospective [External Examiners](#), and two potential [Internal Examiners](#).

The Internal Assessment Meeting determines whether the completed thesis is representative of proper standards and to examine the student on both the substance and implications of their research. It is the responsibility of the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS, to ensure that all other requirements for the degree have been satisfactorily completed. The Oral Defence is open to all members of academic staff, graduate students, undergraduate students, and public who wish to attend. Planning for an Oral Defence should consider the deadlines for convocation as noted in the Brock University [Graduate Studies Calendar](#). Note that difficulties in scheduling a University Oral Thesis Defence may be compounded by holiday schedules.

#### **4.8.1 Members of the Examination Committee**

The Examination Committee will consist of the members of the student's Supervisory Committee, an Internal Examiner from Brock University, an External Examiner, and the Dean

of the FGSPA (or designate) as Chair.

The **External Examiner** criteria can be found on the [External Examiner Approval form](#).

The approval of the External Examiner is the responsibility of the Dean of the FGSPA or designate.

The External Examiner's Report is directly received by the FGSPA. The report must be submitted ten business days prior to the University Oral Thesis Defence. The External Examiner's report will be shared with the Supervisory Committee and the graduate student prior to the defence.

The **Internal Examiner** criteria can be found on the [Internal Examiner Approval form](#). The Internal Examiner must be a faculty member of Brock who is ranked as an Associate or Full Professor from any academic unit, outside of the FAHS and will have had an "arms-length relationship" with the student, and project (i.e. have not collaborated and/or published with the student). The approval of the Internal Examiner is the responsibility of the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies, FAHS.

The Chair of the University Oral Defence is the Dean of the FGSPA or their designate.

#### ***4.8.2 Roles and Responsibilities Prior to the Thesis Defence***

Student:

- The student must ensure that the thesis is complete and meets the format guidelines specified by the FGSPA, FGS Thesis Format Specifications .
- The student must ensure that a copy of the thesis is sent to the FAHS Graduate Program Office ten to twelve weeks prior to the defence.

Supervisor:

- Submit to FAHS Graduate Program Office the External Examiner form, providing three possible external examiners listing their academic work and contact information as well as a CV for the External Examiner listed as #1.
- Submit to FAHS Graduate Program Office the Internal Examiner form, listing in ranked order three faculty members.
- Three possible defence dates that are available to all committee members and the student.

FAHS Graduate Office:

- Contacts the External and Internal Examiners for their availability for the defence date/time.
- Confirms the defence date and time with all parties.
- Provides the name of the External and Internal Examiners who have agreed to serve to the FGSPA by submitting a Supervisory Committee Approval of Thesis for Oral Defence form.
- Send a formal invitation to the Internal Examiner along with the thesis.

FGSPA:

- Sends formal invite to the External Examiner along with the thesis.
- Advertises the Thesis Defence across the University campus.

- Receives the External Examiner’s report and shares it with the supervisor and FAHS Graduate Office. This report must be received by the FGSPA at least ten business days prior to the defence.
- Thesis defence forms downloaded and provided to the Chair of the defence.

## 4.9 Format of the Thesis Defence

### 4.9.1 Conduct of the Thesis Defence

All members of the Examination Committee will assemble at the scheduled location 20 minutes before the planned start of the defence. Currently, the procedures for the examination are reviewed by the Chair of the Examination Committee.

The FGSPA outlines the required [format and procedures for a doctoral defence](#) here.

### 4.9.2 Post Defence Procedures

After the successful defence the student may have revisions to complete. Once all the revisions have been made and approved by their supervisor, the student must upload their thesis document to the [Brock University Digital Repository](#). Brock University Digital Repository. Please note, the thesis must meet the [FGS Thesis Format Specifications](#) to be approved by the FGSPA.

The student must complete and submit the required thesis forms to the FAHS Graduate Program Office:

- Thesis Non-Exclusive Licence
- Thesis and Major Research Paper Copyright Licence
- Request to Restrict the Circulation of Thesis (optional)

These [student forms](#) can be found on the FGSPA website.

## 5 APPEAL PROCEDURES

Students who have concerns about a grade in a particular course or decisions regarding academic standing (e.g. passing the Comprehensive Examination, Thesis Proposal, Internal Thesis Defence or Final Thesis Defence) should refer to the procedures outlined in the [Graduate Calendar](#), section XIII Graduate Student Appeals.

## 6 DIRECT TRANSFER FROM THE MASTER'S TO THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

This opportunity is intended for *exceptional* students who show a rare talent commensurate with Doctoral work during their first year of their Master's program. A student in the Applied Health Sciences Master's program who meets *all* the below criteria is eligible to apply to transfer directly to the PhD program:

- Completion of all Master's coursework.
- A minimum grade of 88% in each of the Master's courses and an overall average of 90% for these courses.
- Successful defence of the Master's research proposal.
- Updated Master's Progress Report (found in the AHSC Master's Student Handbook - Appendix 3)
- A publication record appropriate for the applicant's stage of career (as documented in their CV).
- Letter of support from each Supervisory Committee member (including the supervisor and appointed committee members).
- Submission of a completed application package to the FAHS Graduate Program Office by June 1<sup>st</sup> in the first year of the MA/MSc program.
- There must be available spots in the PhD program after all eligible applicants for the upcoming academic year have been considered.

The application package (Appendix 4) will be reviewed by the FAHS Graduate Committee, where additional information and/or an interview may be required. Members of the Committee who are a supervisor or member of the applicant's supervisory committee will not be present for the discussion and will not vote on the motion.

If the transfer is approved by the FAHS Graduate Committee, an admission recommendation will be forwarded to the FGSPA in time for a September 1st entry. January transfer admissions will not be considered.

Relevant 500-level credits previously earned will be transferred to fulfill the PhD course requirements except for AHSC 5N01, as it is a non-credit course.

After being transferred to the Doctoral program, students who may have difficulties advancing in the program are eligible to return to the Master's program and earn their Master's degree without reapplying for admission.

## Appendix 1: Timeline for Completion of the PhD Degree in Applied Health Sciences (Years 1-4)

| TASK   | APPROVAL REQUIRED                                    |
|--|--|
| <b>YEAR 1</b>  |  |
| Approval and Completion of Courses                                     | Supervisor   |
| Establish Advisory Committee   | Supervisor, Student, Associate Dean, FAHS            |
| Obtain Reading Lists from Advisory Committee for Comprehensive Exam    | Advisory Committee                                   |
| Prepare for Comprehensive Examination                                  | Supervisor, Advisory Committee                       |
| Meetings with Advisory Committee to Discuss Research/Future Directions | Supervisor, Advisory Committee                       |
| <b>YEAR 2</b>  |  |
| Comprehensive Examination  | Supervisor, Advisory Committee, Associate Dean, FAHS |
| Prepare Thesis Proposal  | Supervisor, Advisory Committee                       |
| Defend Thesis Proposal   | Advisory Committee, Associate Dean, FAHS             |
| Meet with Advisory Committee to Discuss Research and Future Directions | Supervisor, Advisory Committee                       |
| <b>YEAR 3</b>  |  |
| Complete Review of Literature and Methods                              | Supervisor, Advisory Committee                       |
| Continuous Data Collection   | Supervisor, Advisory Committee                       |
| Meeting with Advisory Committee to Discuss Thesis Progress             | Supervisor, Advisory Committee                       |

| TASK  | EXPECTED TIME     | APPROVAL REQUIRED  |
|---|-------------------|--|
| <b>YEAR 4</b>   |                   |  |
| Data Collection and Analysis Complete   | September/October |  |
| First Draft of Thesis to Supervisor   | January to March  | Supervisor   |
| Complete Revisions  | March             | Supervisor   |
| Distribute Thesis to Advisory Committee   | April             | Supervisor, Advisory Committee   |
| Acquire Committee Approval to proceed with an Internal Assessment Meeting                               | May               | Supervisor, Advisory Committee, Associate Dean, FAHS   |
| Complete Thesis Corrections based on Internal Assessment Meeting  | June              | Supervisor, Advisory Committee   |
| Notify FAHS Graduate Office of Intent to Defend, Names of External/ Internal Examiners, Date of Defence | June              | Supervisor, Advisory Committee, Associate Dean, FAHS   |
| University Oral Thesis Defence  | August            | Supervisor, Advisory Committee, FAHS Graduate Office, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs |
| Thesis Corrections and Final Submission to Brock Repository   | Late August       | Supervisor, FAHS Graduate Office   |

## Faculty of Applied Health Sciences

### Appendix 2: Tips For PhD Students as you Prepare for the Comprehensive Exam

- ✓ **Carefully considering which format works best for you! The formats are explained in section 4.5. *Comprehensive Examination* in the PhD Student Handbook.**
  - 'Question and answer' format is a traditional style and provides an opportunity for a deeper understanding in 3 or 4 specific areas (often with one question focused on a methodological aspect). Work with your committee, and individually with each of your committee members, to focus the areas of study that will be relevant to each of the questions that will be asked.
  - Tri-council grant application format provides the opportunity to develop a practical skill of learning how to write a grant, with an emphasis on the background literature to support the research questions as well as a focus on the approach/study design.
  - Review format may seem attractive to gain an additional publication. If choosing this format, consider whether the allotted period of time (typically a maximum of 3 months) is sufficient to address your topic of interest at the level needed for a publication. Consider that you will likely need to still commit many hours beyond the exam period to get it ready for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.
  - Research/Scholarly or Creative works is a newer format to consider in consultation with your supervisor and committee and involves preparation of three works.
- ✓ **Communication with your committee members throughout the preparation for the comprehensive exam – *including the preparation prior to the 'clock starting' and while you are studying and/or writing and preparing for the oral examination* – helps ensure your success, as well as the best outcome! You aren't 'bothering' committee members with these meetings – it is part of our responsibility as a supervisor or committee member to guide you! We are here to help and want you to do your best!**

*The following is strongly recommended:*

- Develop a clear and detailed outline of the topics with your committee members. *This includes documentation of the learning expectations and assessment guidelines.* This is best completed during a committee meeting focused on the comprehensive exam process. Come prepared with any questions about topic(s) or format and seek clarification on any aspects at this meeting. Have a fulsome discussion of the topic(s), learning expectations and assessment guidelines!
- Be proactive and plan for a minimum of biweekly meetings with at least one or two of your committee members throughout the comprehensive process to check in about your understanding and progress with readings and preparations. May be helpful to set a consistent time each week to get these check-ins in calendars. (remember, one of your committee members is your supervisor)
- These meetings inform the committee member(s) about areas where you may need more guidance and/or specific papers to focus on for the coming week. The exam period moves very quickly!
- The meetings don't need to be long but provide important 'check-ins' – to help ensure you are focusing on and understanding the relevant literature, and if you aren't, to

redirect/guide your learnings. (Note: meetings with committee members do not include direct feedback on written work, either draft or final versions of responses, prior to the exam.)

- Refine your outline, as needed, with guidance of your committee members. This is your written agreement with your committee regarding what you are expected to learn and how you will be assessed at the Oral examination.

## Appendix 3 - Graduate students and evidence synthesis reviews: successful strategies

Evidence syntheses – including systematic reviews and scoping reviews – are time-intensive research projects requiring a team approach and methodological expertise.

**To determine what type of project is best suited to your objectives and timelines, please consult this table.**

| Your timeline | Your objective   | Review type   | Required resources   | Suitable for   |
|---------------|--|---|--|--|
| < 6 months    | Produce thorough summary of research evidence on a topic   | Literature review (aka narrative review)  | Suitable for independent research<br>Moderate to advanced searching skills   | Publication in journal<br>Thesis/dissertation chapter<br>Comprehensive exams<br>Directed readings<br>Directed study  |
| < 6 months    | Rapidly produce evidence on a focused research question to inform decision-making, particularly regarding urgent and emergent issues in health and public policy | Rapid review  | Team of at least 2 researchers<br>Subject expertise<br>Methodological expertise<br>Advanced searching skills   | Report/white paper<br>Evidence briefing<br>Publication in journal (less common)<br>Thesis/dissertation chapter<br>Comprehensive exams<br>Directed readings<br>Directed study |
| > 1 year      | Undertake a structured review that identifies, selects, synthesizes and appraises all research evidence relevant to a highly focused research question           | Systematic review<br><br>Note: add 1+ months for systematic review with meta-analysis | Team of at least 2 researchers, with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> available for screening support<br>Subject expertise<br>Methodological expertise<br>Expert searching skills | Publication in journal<br>Thesis/dissertation chapter  |
| > 1 year      | Undertake a structured review that identifies, selects, and synthesizes all research evidence relevant to a broad research question(s)                           | Scoping review  | Team of at least 2 researchers, with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> available for screening support<br>Subject expertise<br>Methodological expertise<br>Expert searching skills | Publication in journal<br>Thesis/dissertation chapter  |

| Additional option: evidence synthesis protocol |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Timeline                                       | Description  | Outcomes   |
| <6 months                                      | <p>Research protocols explicitly describe the methods for the synthesis review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-rationale &amp; objectives for the review</li> <li>-inclusion &amp; exclusion criteria (e.g. study design, population, publication years, language, etc)</li> <li>-methods (e.g., search strategy for literature, methods for extraction, analysis &amp; reporting)</li> <li>-team responsibilities</li> <li>-timelines</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Gain skills in evidence synthesis methods</li> <li>-Potential public registration/journal publication</li> <li>-Potential precursor to full evidence synthesis review</li> </ul> |



**Faculty of Applied Health Sciences**

**Appendix 4: Application for Direct Transfer from the Master's to the Doctoral Program**

**Section 1: Criteria for Consideration**

- Completion of all Master’s coursework
- A minimum grade of 88% in each of the Master’s courses and an overall average of 90% for these courses
- Successful defence of the Master’s research proposal
- Submission of a 2-page PhD research proposal
- A publication record appropriate for the applicant’s stage of career (as documented in the CV)
- Letter of support from each member of the advisory committee
- Submission of a completed application package to the FAHS Graduate Program Office ([ahsgradstudies@brocku.ca](mailto:ahsgradstudies@brocku.ca)) by June 1<sup>st</sup> in the first year of the MA/MSc program
- There must be available spots in the PhD program after all eligible applicants for the upcoming academic year have been considered.

**Section 2: To be completed by the student and submitted to the student's supervisor for review and approval.**

**Applicant’s Name:**

**Student #:**

**Degree:**

**Field of Specialization:**

**Current Term of Program:**

**Date Coursework Completed:**

**Overall Average:**

**AHSC 5N01:** Pass      Fail

**Course:**                      **Mark:**

**Course:**                      **Mark:**

**Course:**                      **Mark:**

**Course:**                      **Mark:**

**Course:**                      **Mark:**

**Course:**                      **Mark:**

**Date of Master’s Research Proposal Defence:**

**Title of Master’s Research Proposal:**

**PhD Proposal Document (2 pages) attached:**

**CV attached:**

**Student Signature:**

**Date:**

**Section 3: We have read the requirements for the applicant to transfer to the doctoral program and agree that the student's academic record, and research proposal meet the requirements for the doctoral program.**

**Supervisor Name:**

**Supervisor Signature:**

**Date:**

**Committee Member Name:**

**Committee Member Signature:**

**Date:**

**Committee Member Name:**

**Committee Member Signature:**

**Date:**

**Committee Member Name:**

**Committee Member Signature:**

**Date:**

**Section 4: The supervisor must submit a complete application package to the FAHS Graduate Office ([ahsgradstudies@brocku.ca](mailto:ahsgradstudies@brocku.ca)) before June 1<sup>st</sup> in the student's first year in the program.**

**Documents to be included in the Application Package:**

Signed Application Form

Student's PhD Research Proposal (maximum 2 pages)

Student's CV

Letter of Support from Supervisor

Letter of Support from Committee Member #1

Letter of Support from Committee Member #2

Letter of Support from Committee Member #3 (if required)

**The supervisor confirms the student meets the criteria as noted in Section 1 and the application is complete.**

**Supervisor's Signature:**

**Date of Approval by FAHS Graduate Committee:**

**Associate Dean, FAHS Graduate & Research Signature:**