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Program Handbook

MSc in Biological Sciences

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	WELCOME	4
2	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION.....	4
2.1	Program Overview	4
2.2	Program Objectives	4
2.3	Program Outcomes.....	4
3	PROGRAM GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION	5
3.1	Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs	5
3.2	Program Governance	5
3.3	Program Administration and Faculty.....	6
3.4	Graduate Students' Association	6
4	ACADEMIC REGULATIONS AND UNIVERSITY POLICY	7
5	STUDENT STATUS	7
5.1	Continuous Registration	7
6	FEES AND FUNDING	8
6.1	Fees.....	8
6.2	Funding and Financial Assistance	8
6.3	Graduate Student Employment.....	8
7	SUPERVISION AND COMMITTEES	9
7.1	Supervisor	9
7.2	Supervisory Committee Composition.....	9
7.3	Meetings and Monitoring Research Progress	9
8	DEGREE REQUIREMENTS	11
8.1	Overview of Degree Requirements	11
8.2	Courses	12
8.2.1	Required Courses	12
8.2.2	Elective Courses	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8.2.3	Course Evaluation	13
8.3	Practicum / Clinical / Co-op Requirements	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8.4	Professional Development Requirements.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8.5	Thesis / Research Proposal	13
8.5.1	Procedures	Error! Bookmark not defined.

8.5.2	Format.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8.5.3	Evaluation.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8.6	Thesis / Research Defence.....	15
8.6.1	Procedures	15
8.6.2	Committee Composition	15
8.6.3	Written Document	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8.6.4	Submission	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8.6.5	Evaluation and Possible Outcomes.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8.7	Post-Defence Requirements.....	16
8.7.1	Required Forms.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8.7.2	Submission to Brock Digital Repository	16
9	ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS	16
9.1	Academic Performance and Continuation	16
9.2	Residency Requirements and Recommended Completion Timelines	Error! Bookmark not defined.
9.3	Progress Reports.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
9.4	Final Stage Status.....	17
9.5	Application to Graduate	17
10	ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT, APPEALS.....	17
10.1	Academic Integrity.....	17
10.2	Academic Misconduct	18
10.3	Appeals	18
11	HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELLNESS.....	18
11.1	Program-Specific Details.....	19
12	STUDENT RESOURCES	19
12.1	Program-Specific Resources	Error! Bookmark not defined.
12.2	FGSPA Graduate-Specific Resources	19
12.3	Additional Resources at Brock.....	20
13	APPENDICES	Error! Bookmark not defined.

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 their supervisor, Graduate Program Director (GPD), or the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGSPA) on critical matters where they are unsure.

This program handbook reflects general policies and guidelines from Brock University's [Graduate Calendar](#) and [Faculty Handbook](#). The specific documents can be consulted for further details.

1 WELCOME

Welcome to graduate studies in the Department of Biological Sciences at Brock University. Our goal is to provide you the opportunities and resources you will need to achieve your goals. To support you, we have developed policies and procedures that will keep you on track throughout your studies. Use this handbook as a resource to guide you and to link to other resources at the university. Additional information about starting your graduate studies at Brock can be found on the [New Student Welcome](#) webpage, including details about course registration, Brightspace (Brock's Learning Management System), and housing options.

2 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

2.1 Program Overview

Students in the biological sciences graduate programs are part of a dynamic, research-intensive environment where you will be supported by excellent facilities, state-of-the-art laboratory equipment for all fields of biological research, and outstanding mentorship.

2.2 Program Objectives

The MSc in Biological Sciences offers four separate specializations: Cell and Molecular Biology; Ecology and Evolution; Neurobiology and Physiology; and Plant Sciences (including Oenology and Viticulture). Within each specialization, you will receive field-specific training that supports your development into an independent research scientist. The program will help you to develop the critical thinking, analytical, and communication skills you need to succeed in your career.

2.3 Program Outcomes

The MSc in Biological Sciences is a research-based program culminating in a MSc thesis that you will write and defend. You will also gain at least one term of experience as a teaching assistant (TA), though it is typical for students to TA four terms during their degree.

3 PROGRAM GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The MSc in Biological Sciences is overseen by several governance and administrative bodies that support students and faculty. An overview of Brock University's governance structure can be found on the [University Secretariat](#) webpage. The following committees and units are responsible for aspects of the governance and administration of the MSc in Biological Sciences program.

3.1 Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs

The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGSPA) works closely with Brock's six academic Faculties — Applied Health Sciences, Education, Humanities, Mathematics and Science, Social Sciences, and the Goodman School of Business — to:

- provide quality administrative service and support to current and future graduate students, supervisors, and graduate programs;
- support the personal and professional development of graduate students and supervisors;
- offer competitive funding packages to financially support students through their studies;
- integrate graduate studies into the research, pedagogical, and outreach missions of the University; and
- support the growth and development of graduate programs and the graduate studies sector.

For more information, visit the [Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs](#) website, including the [Contact Us](#) page.

3.2 Program Governance

Faculty of Mathematics and Science

The Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies (Melanie Pilkington), within the Faculty of Mathematics and Science, oversees the graduate programs within the faculty.

Graduate Program Committee (GPC)

The **Graduate Program Director (GPD)** is appointed by the department committee to oversee the graduate program. The GPD carries out all duties in regular consultation with the Graduate Program Committee (GPC). The GPD typically serves a three-year term and shares the support of an administrator/coordinator for the FMS (see description of GPAC below). The GPD works with the GPC, which is composed of the GPD (who serves as chair) and all Department of Biological Sciences faculty members. There may also be a graduate student representative involved in this committee. GPD manages recruitment and admissions, preparation of the Graduate Calendar submission, scholarship adjudication, student progress, and responding to student concerns. The GPC manages changes to the structure of the program.

The **Graduate Program Administrative Coordinator (GPAC)** oversees the day-to-day operations of the program and provides administrative support to GPDs within the FMS. The GPAC is often the first point of contact for students with questions about the program.

3.3 Program Administration and Faculty

Important: All MSc in Biological Sciences inquiries should be directed to:

Graduate Program Director (GPD)

Jeff Stuart

jstuart@brocku.ca

Graduate Program Administrative Coordinator (GPAC)

Elena Genkin

egenkin@brocku.ca

A full faculty listing for the MSc Biological Sciences, along with profiles and research interests, can be found in the program's [faculty directory](#).

3.4 Graduate Students' Association

The [Graduate Students' Association \(GSA\)](#) is a student organization that represents the interests of all graduate students enrolled in a diploma, master's or doctoral program at Brock. Upon course registration each term, a student becomes a member of the GSA and will gain access to all member benefits, including optional health and dental coverage, a transit pass, student clubs, and other supports and services.

4 ACADEMIC REGULATIONS AND UNIVERSITY POLICY

Academic regulations and University policies pertaining to graduate studies at Brock University are outlined in the [Graduate Calendar \(Academic Regulations page\)](#) and the [Faculty Handbook \(section 3.B\)](#). All students are required to be aware of, and adhere to, these regulations and policies. Some relevant sections have been included in this handbook below for reference.

The Graduate Calendar sets out the regulations, programs and courses for the academic year indicated. Students may follow the academic policies and program regulations set out in the calendar of the term in which they were first admitted to the program, or any subsequent calendar. Students whose studies have been interrupted for one or more years (by not enrolling in at least one course) become subject to the Calendar regulations in effect at the time of their re-registration.

Students can check their regulation and calendar year by accessing my.brocku.ca and visiting the Program Status page. For current course descriptions, restrictions, and prerequisites a student will refer to the current [calendar](#) and/or the [course timetable](#).

5 STUDENT STATUS

Students are admitted to the University either as a full-time or part-time student and this status can only be changed for valid reasons with the permission of the GPD and the FGSPA.

Full-time graduate students are defined as students whose main focus is graduate study for the purpose of obtaining a graduate degree. Graduate study differs from undergraduate study in that it is, for most students, an activity that is highly concentrated, demanding and all-consuming. Full-time status is not solely dictated by the number of credits a student is enrolled in each term. Additional details can be found in the [Graduate Calendar](#) under Academic Regulations, II. Student Status.

5.1 Continuous Registration

Graduate students must maintain continuous registration in each successive term from the time of initial admission until degree requirements are complete. This includes registration in BIOL 5F90 each term. Students who fail to register for any term, and who have not been granted inactive status or a leave of absence, are considered to have withdrawn from their program of study. Additional details can be found in the [Graduate Calendar](#) under Academic Regulations, II. Student Status. Relevant forms can be found at <https://brocku.ca/graduate-studies/student-resources/forms/>.

6 FEES AND FUNDING

6.1 Fees

The fee structure of graduate programs are outlined by Brock University and the FGSPA. Students should consult the [Graduate Tuition and Fees](#) webpage and the information provided in their offer letter for the most up-to-date information.

6.2 Funding and Financial Assistance

There are many sources of funding that may be available to graduate students:

- Brock internal funding support packages are available to eligible full-time, research-based master's students. Details about your personalized funding package are normally included as part of your offer of admission and can differ from student to student. Funding sources may include scholarships, Research Fellowships, Graduate Fellowships, and Graduate Assistantships (employment income earned through teaching assistant or research assistant positions). Details are on FGSPA's [Funding Information](#) webpage.
- Students may be eligible for a variety of scholarships, bursaries, and awards administered by Brock University. A complete listing of available awards is available on FGSPA's [Internal Scholarships and Awards](#) and [FGSPA Awards](#) webpages.
- External scholarships for MSc Biology students include those funded by the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) of Canada and the Ontario Graduate Scholarship funded by the Government of Ontario. Students apply for these on their own, but guidance is available from supervisors, supervisory committee members, and the GPD. As of July 14, 2026, the NSERC CGS-M site is <https://nserc-crsng.canada.ca/en/funding-opportunity/canada-graduate-research-scholarship-masters-program> and the OGS site is <https://osap.gov.on.ca/OSAPPortal/en/A-ZListofAid/PRDR019245.html>. Please consult these websites for information about due dates. Scholarships from foundations or other agencies are also available. These applications may be accepted prior to a student beginning their studies, or during their graduate studies.
- Check your eligibility to apply for loans through the [Ontario Student Assistance Program \(OSAP\)](#). Additional information is also available on Brock's [OSAP](#) webpage.

6.3 Graduate Student Employment

Full-time graduate students must limit their paid University, and external, employment, including Graduate Teaching Assistantships and Research Assistantships. There is no restriction with respect to time spent in paid employment for part-time students. As of July 14, Christine Carpenter-Cleland is managing the assignment of TAs for Biological Sciences graduate students. Please contact Christine for more information.

Additional details can be found in the [Graduate Calendar](#) under Academic Regulations, II. Student Status. For full regulations regarding TAs, including duties and rates of pay, see the [CUPE 4207 Collective Agreement](#).

7 SUPERVISION AND COMMITTEES

7.1 Supervisor

The supervisor will assist the student, often with consultation of the supervisory committee, with course selection, development and defence of the research proposal, progress through ethics reviews (if applicable), conduct of research, and writing and defence of the thesis and also encourage and support the dissemination of research findings.

7.2 Supervisory Committee Composition

All students are supervised by a thesis advisory committee, the members of which will provide guidance throughout the degree. Thesis committees usually consist of the student's research supervisor and two additional faculty members from the Department of Biological Sciences, one of whom will serve as Chair of the Committee. Exceptions to this structure are possible, including co-supervision and instances where a supervisor's primary appointment is outside of the Department of Biological Sciences. In the case of co-supervision, the committee will typically have four members: both co-supervisors and two additional members.

Thesis advisory committees will be chosen by the Graduate Program Director in consultation with the supervisor(s) and student, subject to agreement and availability of requested faculty. The Graduate Program Director will normally ensure that the following criteria are fulfilled:

1. There are 4 major research areas in the Department. At least one committee member other than the supervisor will be from a research specialization close to the student's.
2. Thesis advisory committees consist of the supervisor or co-supervisors plus two members of the Biological Sciences Graduate Program faculty.
3. Faculty members whose primary department is not Biological Sciences, but who are associate members of the Department of Biological Sciences, may supervise graduate students and may be members of thesis advisory committees.
4. Adjunct faculty members in Biological Sciences may co-supervise graduate students with faculty members from Biological Sciences and may be members of thesis advisory committees.

7.3 Meetings and Monitoring Research Progress

Students are responsible for convening their committees according to the following schedule:

1. First meeting (planning): in the first term of study
2. First progress meeting: end of second term or during third term of study
3. Subsequent progress meetings: as needed; minimally one per year.

Additional thesis advisory committee meetings must also be held to discuss major changes in research plans. However, students can consult with committee members outside of scheduled meetings as well. When scheduling your committee meeting, please communicate the duration of time required for the meeting to your committee members (typically 2 hours). Coordinate with the department administrative assistant(s) to reserve a room and communicate time and place to all committee members.

At each meeting, students should provide a brief presentation detailing their research plans and/or progress. The length of presentation will vary depending on progress through the degree. While 10-15 minutes may be sufficient for an initial planning meeting, an hour may be needed when presenting the entire thesis project toward the end of the degree. Use your discretion and discuss with your supervisor. Your presentations should always contain the following information:

1. Degree requirements completed to date. For course work, include grades. In general, include papers published, conference presentations given, and scholarships/awards won. Provide good insight into your activities. Bring attention to any remaining coursework or other degree-related activities.
2. Title of thesis
3. Project objectives/questions/hypothesis
4. Background literature
5. Methodology
6. Results from your research, which will include: samples of raw data, analysed / summarized data, statistical analyses
7. Discussion/Conclusions
8. Timeline for project objectives

*Note –your thesis supervisory committee members may not remember details of your project if they are meeting with you once a year (they will typically be on 10-20 such committees). Therefore, at each meeting, ensure you provide the relevant background and contextual information for your research to be understood.

All supervisory committee meetings must be documented using the [Graduate Student Progress Report Form](#) (available on the Biological Sciences web site). The outcome of the meeting will be summarized by the committee as Excellent, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory in each of several categories. Following each meeting, please send the completed form to the GPD and GPAC, along with the PowerPoint (or similar) slides from the presentation. Students should be aware that it is their responsibility to make sure committee meetings take place; however, if they find

that committee members are unavailable for extended periods of time this should be brought to the attention of the GPD.

*Note that the GPD has the right not to sign course registration forms for students who failed to have the required committee meetings without legitimate reasons.

Transferring from the MSc to the PhD program

Students who have successfully completed one year in the Brock Biological Sciences MSc program may be eligible to transfer to the PhD program. Students wishing to transfer will normally have completed all MSc course work within the first year of study, with a grade of at least 80% in each course. Students planning to transfer should discuss with their supervisor and then convene a supervisory committee meeting to communicate that goal. Transfer to PhD requires that the MSc candidate passes a predoctoral exam. The topic for this exam is to be discussed at this meeting. Details of the predoctoral exam can be found in the PhD in Biological Sciences program handbook. Note that the predoctoral examination for the purpose of transferring to PhD can take place after the third term but no later than the sixth term. Following the successful completion of the predoctoral exam, the graduate committee will approve the transfer of the student from the MSc to the PhD program.

Permission to Write the MSc Thesis

The student will consult with the MSc supervisory committee to determine at what point they have completed all of the research and analysis needed for their degree by convening a meeting for that purpose (Although the student may have already begun to write the thesis, and indeed may have published individual chapters, this permission is needed prior to completing the written thesis). At the successful conclusion of this meeting, the Progress Report Form will indicate that the student has collected sufficient data and completed sufficient analysis to proceed to writing the thesis. For guidelines on how to write the MSc thesis see section 8.3 below.

8 DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

8.1 Overview of Degree Requirements

The MSc in Biological Sciences program is a six-term program that includes course work and a research thesis. The thesis will be chosen in consultation with the student's Supervisor and supervisory committee. Students are expected to complete their course requirements within the first three terms of study and conclude all program requirements (including a thesis defence) within six academic terms.

The 'Academic Performance and Progress' section of this handbook (Section 9) describes the suggested timeframes for completion of degree milestones. Students should consult with their supervisor and supervisory committee when planning a program of study.

For a full list of graduate course offerings by subject area, please refer to the Courses tab within the navigation menu in the [Graduate Calendar](#). For a full list of scheduled courses for the current academic year, please visit the [Graduate Academic Timetable](#). Additional details about course registration can be found on FGSPA's [Graduate Course Registration](#) webpage.

8.2 Courses

8.2.1 Required Courses

1. BIOL 5F90 – MSc Thesis. Students must enrol in BIOL 5F90 each term.
2. BIOL 5P95 – Research Seminar. Normally taken in the first September of the program (see BIOL 5P95 guidelines)
3. One half-credit from BIOL 5P85, BIOL 5P86, BIOL 5P87, BIOL 5P88, or BIOL 5P89. Note that not all of these courses will be offered each year, except for BIOL 5P89 which will be offered once a year.
4. one-half credit from BIOL courses numbered 5(alpha)00 or higher. These courses may be taught in conjunction with the 4(alpha)00 course (i.e. the equivalent undergraduate course), normally with an extra assignment required for the graduate credit. Note that one cannot have credit in the same course at both 4(alpha) and 5(alpha) levels.

Courses are chosen in consultation with the Supervisory Committee. The thesis supervisor is not permitted to be the instructor for all courses in a candidate's program. Also, when appropriate and with prior permission of the Supervisory Committee and GPD, courses offered outside the Department of Biological Sciences may be taken to fulfill course requirements.

Note that MSc students must fill in the [course approval form](#) each term to remain in good standing (and get paid!). The form must be filled in, signed by the supervisor, and then provided to the GPD and Administrative Assistant.

Note that graduate credit is not given in courses where the final grade is less than 70%. Obtaining a failing grade (<70%) in a graduate course is sufficient grounds for dismissal from the program. Students should strive to achieve a minimum grade of 80% in graduate courses, as a high level of expertise is expected.

Note that, depending on their background, candidates may be required to take extra courses from either the graduate or undergraduate calendar in addition to those noted above. This decision is normally made at the time of admission and included in the offer letter. However, if critical deficiencies are identified during the completion of the program, students may be requested to address them via relevant coursework.

In addition to their coursework, to fulfill degree requirements students must participate in the running of undergraduate courses in the Department of Biological Sciences at Brock University as teaching assistants (TA) for a minimum of one term (for which a graduate teaching stipend

will be received). Typically, however, full-time MSc candidates will TA each Fall and Winter term for the two-year duration of their program.

8.2.2 Student Evaluation

At the beginning of each course, course instructors must provide students with a course syllabus that outlines details about their evaluation, assignments required, as well as deadlines and associated penalties if applicable.

8.3 MSc Thesis

The Supervisory Committee, in conjunction with the student, decides when sufficient work has been done to constitute an MSc thesis within the discipline. This is indicated in the [Graduate Student Progress Report Form](#). At this point the student has ‘received permission to write’, although some writing, including publication of data chapters as manuscripts, may have occurred already.

General thesis formatting guidelines are available on the FGSPA [Research-Based Students](#) webpage. The following are general guidelines that reflect typical MSc thesis content and organization in the Biological Sciences graduate program. It is by no means the only possible organization; discuss a suitable organization for *your* work with your supervisory committee. Note that published manuscripts can be included in the thesis in the same basic layout in which they are published but should be formatted to match the other thesis sections. For example, references from such publications should be moved to, and integrated within, the Reference section at the end of the thesis.

Chapter 1 - General Introduction

Chapter 2 – Data Chapter

Chapter 3 – Data Chapter

Chapter 4 – General Discussion and Conclusions

References

Appendices (if needed). These may contain raw data, images, statistical summaries, or other details that are not needed in the main text.

Total length is typically 100-125 pages, but this is not a rule.

Internal Thesis Review

Once the supervisor(s) agree(s) that the thesis draft is ready for internal review by the supervisory committee, an email to that effect, from the supervisor(s) or the student, should be forwarded to the GPD. The student should provide an electronic copy of the thesis in MS Word (or similar, easily editable format) to the GPD, who will forward it to all committee members.

Normally three weeks is allowed for any individual committee member to review the thesis and return comments/edits (but see below for black-out periods) or accept it as ready for external review. If edits are needed, they should be done expediently and the document then recirculated. The thesis may be submitted for external review once required revisions have been made, as recommended in the internal review.

External Thesis Review and Defence Date

The student must submit the final copy of the thesis to the Graduate Program Director as a MS Word (or similar) file. The supervisor and student must also complete the [Master of Science External Examiner form](#) with a list of three potential external examiners and their contact information, ranked in order of preference, and submit to the GPD. An external examiner must not be a *member of the program*. Thus, a faculty member in another department at Brock who is not an associate with the department of Biological Sciences can serve as external examiner. The list of potential external examiners is forwarded to the Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Science by the GPD. Once the external examiners have been named, a defence date will be set. The date will normally be 4-6 weeks from the external examiner notification date. Electronic copies of the thesis will be distributed to the committee. Students should keep a copy for themselves and bring it to the defence.

Black-out Periods for Internal Reviews and Defences: Recognizing that holiday and/or particularly busy times may interfere with supervisory committee activities, two black-out periods have been established. These periods of time will not be counted in the three-week turnaround guideline. Summer black-out occurs from August 15th to August 31st, immediately prior to the beginning of Fall Term. Winter black-out is from December 18th to January 3rd to accommodate the annual Winter Break, during most of which Brock University is closed.

Note that students should not submit theses for internal review within these time periods. Students are advised to plan ahead. For example, if you wish to defend your thesis on September 1, you should submit it for external review before the end of June. Likewise, if you wish to defend on January 5th, you should submit for external review by November 5th.

8.4 Thesis / Research Defence

8.4.1 Committee Composition

The examination committee is composed of five faculty members (or six in the case of co-supervisors): the committee chair (Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, Mathematics and Science, or a Dean's delegate, often the GPD), external examiner, thesis supervisor, and two departmental representatives (normally the two departmental members that were on the advisory committee).

8.4.2 Procedures

Format of thesis defence

1. Exam chair introduces committee and candidate, explains the format of the defence.
2. Candidate presents a research seminar, around 30 minutes in length, followed by a short period in which the floor is open to questions from the audience.
3. After a short break, the examination begins. Audience members may remain but may not ask questions and may not leave the room and return.
4. The order of questioning is usually external examiner, 1st departmental representative, 2nd departmental representative, supervisor. The chair of the examining committee is not required to participate in the questioning period, but may do so if they choose to.
5. The defence period is normally about 2 hours, consisting of two rounds of questioning by the examining committee. Typically, each committee member takes 15 minutes in the first round and 10 minutes or less in the second round. However, the exam may be longer if the committee deems it necessary. In the case of co-supervision, each supervisor will take half of the allotted time.
6. When the committee has no further questions, the Chair thanks the candidate and the audience, who then leave the room so that the Committee may deliberate in camera.

Possible outcomes of the exam:

All members of the examining committee will vote on the outcome of the exam, except the Chair, for a total of 4 votes (or 5 votes if the student is co-supervised).

If at least 3 members of the committee vote to fail, the result is FAIL. If at least 3 members of the committee vote to pass, the result is PASS.

In the event of a tie vote (2 votes for pass, 2 votes for fail), *the vote of the external examiner will be the outcome of the exam.*

8.5 Post-Defence Requirements

There are several forms that must be submitted to your GPAC, which are available on the FGSPA [Student Forms](#) webpage under Thesis Submission. Some forms are circumstantial*, but all students must submit the following:

- Library and Archives Canada (LAC) Non-Exclusive License to Reproduce Theses
- Brock University Thesis and Major Research Paper Copyright License Form

*Under certain circumstances (e.g. to protect confidential commercial information, patentable material, pending submission to a journal for publication), the Vice-Provost and Dean of FGSPA may approve to restrict circulation of a thesis in the digital repository for up to twelve months from the date of a successful defence. Details and instructions can be found on the FGSPA [Research-Based Students](#) webpage.

8.5.1 Submission to Brock Digital Repository

Upon completion of thesis revisions, students must upload their final thesis document to the [Brock University Digital Repository](#). Details and instructions can be found on the FGSPA [Research-Based Students](#) webpage.

Important: Students will not be approved to graduate by FGSPA until their dissertation is finalized in the digital repository.

9 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS

9.1 Academic Performance and Continuation

Graduate students must achieve and maintain minimum satisfactory academic performance to be eligible to continue in a graduate program. As stated above, failure to pass a graduate course is grounds for removal from the program. Alternatively, when a student's research progress is deemed unsatisfactory by the supervisory committee, they can recommend to the GPD that the student be placed on academic probation for the subsequent term or required to leave the program.

Satisfactory progress in the MSc in Biological Sciences degree requires achieving the milestones outlined in the table below at the appropriate times.

1 st term	By the end of the first term, students should have had their first supervisory committee meeting.
3 rd term	By the end of their first year in the program, students should have completed the majority (ideally all) of their course requirements. They should have had two supervisory committee meetings. Ideally, at least one TAsip should be completed.
5 th term	By the end of their 5 th term in the program, students should have completed all courses. They should have completed all TAsip requirements (one course TA).

	They should be writing a first draft of their thesis and be ready to circulate it for internal review early in their 6 th term of study.
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Note that failure to achieve some or all of these milestones is grounds for removal from the program.

9.2 Final Stage Status

If an additional term beyond the standard length of their program is required to finish the program, students can apply for 'Final Stage Status' (FSS) for reduced tuition in the final academic term. Students approved for Final Stage Status by their graduate program must have completed all course work, other program requirements and must have a complete draft of their thesis that their supervisory committee agrees requires no additional chapters/sections. Students approved for Final Stage Status must be able to complete their exit requirement within the subsequent term. Final Stage Status will be awarded only once and for only one term.

The Final Stage Status form is available on the FGSPA [Student Forms](#) webpage under Registration and Student Status. Deadlines for submitting a Final Stage Status form are August 1 for fall term, December 1 for winter term, and April 1 for spring term.

9.3 Application to Graduate

To receive their diploma, a student must apply to graduate through their my.brocku portal even if not planning to attend a convocation ceremony. Brock has two graduation ceremonies, in June and October of each year. The deadline to apply to graduate is February 1st for the June (Spring) ceremony and July 1st for the October (Fall) ceremony.

Please refer to the FGSPA [Apply to Graduate](#) webpage for details on applying to graduate, and the FGSPA [Important Dates](#) page for convocation deadlines and dates.

Details about post-graduation work permits (PGWPs) can be found on the [Brock International](#) website.

10 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT, APPEALS

10.1 Academic Integrity

In accordance with the Brock University [Academic Integrity Policy](#), all students are expected to display the highest standards of academic integrity. Academic integrity means upholding a strong personal and professional ethic within your own work, and that of your colleagues. In upholding the principles of academic integrity, graduate students are expected to demonstrate respect and acknowledgement of others' words and ideas when conducting research, writing, publishing, and teaching. This includes the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based tools. Since these tools are evolving rapidly, for up to date policies on their use please visit Brock's

[Academic Integrity](#) webpage and the [Graduate Calendar](#) Academic Regulations page (XII. Academic Integrity/Academic Misconduct).

10.2 Academic Misconduct

Integrity is fundamental to the process of research and scholarship, and misconduct damages the entire academic enterprise. Academic dishonesty, while traditionally defined as plagiarism, also includes inappropriate collaboration with other students, data falsification, fabrication of results, and the unauthorized resubmission of previous work.

In the event a student is suspected of engaging in academic dishonesty, professors will contact the GPD and there will be an interview between the GPD and the student. During this interview students have the right to have an advisor present such as Brock's [Ombudsperson](#). Additional procedures covering academic misconduct can be found on the [Graduate Students - Academic Integrity](#) webpage and in the [Graduate Calendar](#) under Academic Regulations (XII. Academic Integrity/Academic Misconduct).

10.3 Appeals

Students who have concerns about a grade in a particular course should first discuss the issue with the instructor of the course in question.

If the issue cannot be resolved, the student should refer to the pre-appeals procedures and appeal timelines as summarized in Faculty Handbook section III, [Appendix 1](#). Additional details are outlined in the [Graduate Calendar](#) (Academic Regulations, XIII. Graduate Student Appeals) and the [Student Senate Appeals](#) webpage.

11 HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELLNESS

The health and safety of individuals is to be a primary objective in every area of operation at Brock University. Every person utilizing University premises must comply with this policy and all related regulations, standards, programs, and procedures. [Health, Safety and Wellness](#) provides information, resources, tools, and support to assist the Brock community in creating and fostering a healthy, safe, and environmentally sustainable place to visit, study, live, and especially, work. Students should also be aware of Brock's [Occupational Health and Safety Policy](#), as well as [Lab Safety](#) and the process for [incident reporting](#).

As outlined in the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act, students employed by the University are required to complete the mandatory [Health and Safety Awareness Training](#) available on SharePoint in the Health Safety and Wellness Toolbox (requires a Brock employee login).

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Human Rights Code, students employed at Brock University are legally obliged to undertake [mandatory online training](#) through Brightspace, Brock's learning management system.

11.1 Program-Specific Details

Specialized safety training is required for all MSc Biological Sciences students working in wet labs or field environments. This training is administered by the Office of Research Services; contact Claudia Bucciarelli or Leila Vistorte for details about what is required for *your* research work. Students traveling for field work or to conferences or other professional activities should download the International SOS app and register their activities with Brock so that help can be provided, if needed, in a timely fashion. Your supervisor, the GPD, and/or the department Chair should be able to connect you with the appropriate resources.

Students working with animals will need their activities to be approved by the Brock Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC). Students working with human samples or patient-derived data may need permission of the Research Ethics Board (REB). It is the responsibility of the student and supervisor to secure all necessary permissions. If you are unsure, please ask your supervisor, the department Chair, or GPD.

12 STUDENT RESOURCES

Below are details about some of the services and resources available to students across Brock University, including those offered by the FGSPA. For a full list of services and supports available at Brock, please visit the University's [Services, Departments and Offices directory](#).

12.1 FGSPA Graduate-Specific Resources

Academic Writing Supports

All graduate students have access to FGSPA's [academic writing supports](#) to help develop their writing skills. The Graduate Academic Support Specialist, in partnership with [Learning Services](#), offers a variety of one-on-one and group support and events (with in-person, online, and hybrid options) to help graduate students at all levels of study, including bookable sessions, workshops, and events to support their writing development.

Graduate Advising

[Graduate-specific academic advising](#) is available to all graduate students to discuss a variety of topics related to their studies in a safe, confidential environment. FGSPA's Graduate Academic and International Specialist helps students navigate their graduate studies and overcome barriers that may impact their success. Students are encouraged to reach out at any point during their studies for guidance and support.

GRADvantage

[GRADvantage](#) is a centralized hub of academic and professional development resources, workshops, and events, aimed to help guide graduate student success. This framework is organized into five areas based on a student's unique interests and goals for the future:

Communicator, Community Builder, Innovator, Leader, Researcher. Current graduate students can also complete the GRADvantage pathway on ExperienceBU to earn a certificate.

Additional Development Opportunities

Graduate students are encouraged to explore other [development opportunities](#), such as the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) Competition (, GRAMSS conferences (<https://brocku.ca/mathematics-science/gramss/>), Mapping the New Knowledges Graduate Student Conference, and GRADflix to share their research and practice their knowledge translation. Attendance at field-specific conferences outside of Brock University is explicitly encouraged. Costs incurred are typically shared by the supervisor and various university units. These change often, so students are encouraged to check in with the GPD and/or Elena Genkin. As of July 14, 2026, the Provost's Enhancement Fund exists for funding up to \$500 for these activities: <https://brocku.ca/avp-students/funding-opportunities/>. Occasionally, the Department of Biological Sciences will have extra funding to support graduate students. Please contact Ping Liang, Department Chair, or the Biological Sciences Administrative Assistant. In addition, the Graduate Student Association may provide some

12.2 Additional Resources at Brock

Office of Research Services

The [Office of Research Services \(ORS\)](#) provides support to graduate students on internal and external grant funding opportunities, improving research communications and knowledge mobilization, and discovering real-world applications to research. The Office of Research is responsible for ACUC and REB activities, so please contact them if you think you need permissions. Students are encouraged to contact ORS for any further support.

Student Wellness and Accessibility Centre

Brock's [Student Wellness and Accessibility Centre \(SWAC\)](#) offers a range of services that support student mental health (e.g. crisis management, personal counselling), wellness, medical care, and accessibility. Students requiring accommodations during their graduate studies can contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) within SWAC.

Brock University Library

The [Brock University Library](#) offers a variety of resources to students, including scholarly content in digital and print format, diverse study spaces, innovative technologies, an institutional repository and open access publication platforms, and guidelines for research strategies. Hours of operation at Brock's various library locations, including the James A. Gibson Library in Schmon Tower, can be found on the library's website.

Career Services

Brock's [Career Education](#) team helps students with career exploration, feedback on documents (CV, resume, cover letter, statement of intent), job search strategies, interview preparation, and personal branding. Students can contact the Career Education team for further support.

Centre for Pedagogical Innovation

Brock's [Centre for Pedagogical Innovation \(CPI\)](#) supports excellence in teaching and learning across Brock University, including instructional development, support on digital tools for teaching and learning, curriculum support, and fostering effective teaching. Graduate students can explore workshops and supports tailored for teaching assistants through CPI's website.

Brock International

[Brock International](#) offers in-person and virtual support services tailored specifically to international students, including immigration consulting, academic coaching, language support, transitioning to life in Canada and living in the Niagara region, and working as an international student. Details about these services and a listing of events and workshops for international students are available on the Brock International website.