

**DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES  
BROCK UNIVERSITY**

**GRADUATE HANDBOOK  
(June 2022)**

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## Program Requirements - MSc

Students may be admitted as full-time or part-time. Full-time programs should normally be completed in 2 years and part-time programs in 3 years.

### *Required courses*

Students must enrol in **BIOL 5F90** each term. In addition to BIOL 5F90, students must complete a minimum of one and one-half credits of course work. Note that graduate credit is not given in courses where the final grade is less than 70%. Students should strive to achieve a minimum grade of 80% in each of the following graduate courses.

1. BIOL 5P95 – taken in the first September of the program (see BIOL 5P95 guidelines)
2. one-half credit from BIOL 5P85, 5P86, 5P87 or 5P88
3. one-half credit from BIOL courses numbered 5(*alpha*)00 or higher.

Courses are chosen in consultation with the Supervisory Committee. The thesis supervisor may not offer all the courses in a candidate's program. Additional credits may be required of candidates with insufficient preparation in the area of research specialization. When appropriate and with prior permission of the supervisory committee, courses offered outside the Department of Biological Sciences may be taken to fulfill course requirements. 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. Note that obtaining a failing grade (<70%) in a graduate course is sufficient grounds for dismissal from the program.

In addition to the above coursework, students will participate in the running of undergraduate courses in the Department of Biological Sciences at Brock University as teaching assistants for a minimum of one term (for which a graduate teaching stipend will be received).

## 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 upon successful completion of the Biological Sciences predoctoral examination. Students wishing to transfer will normally have completed all MSc course work within that first year with grades of at least 80% in each course. The predoctoral examination will 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 then approve the transfer of the student from the MSc to the PhD program.

## Program Requirements - PhD

A minimum of three years (36 months) full-time study is required. Students will be expected to complete all degree requirements within four years following entry into the PhD program. Students will participate in the running of undergraduate courses in the Department of Biological Sciences at Brock University as teaching assistants for a minimum of one term (for which a graduate teaching stipend will be received).

All students must complete a research project that culminates in a thesis and independent thought and work, and which represents an original contribution to scientific knowledge. There will be an oral defence of the written thesis. The student will be guided in all aspects of his or her graduate program by a supervisory committee.

### *Required courses*

Students must enrol in **BIOL 7F90** each term. In addition, coursework is required. Note that graduate credit is not given in courses where the final grade is less than 70%. Students should strive to achieve a minimum grade of 80% in all their graduate courses.

For students entering the PhD program after completion of an MSc:

1. BIOL 7P95 – taken in the first year of the program
2. one half-credit course numbered 5(*alpha*)00 or higher, and which must not be cross-listed with a 4(*alpha*)00 course

For students who transfer from the MSc to the PhD program:

1. BIOL 5P95
2. one of BIOL 5P85, 5P86, 5P87 or 5P88
3. one half-credit course numbered 5(*alpha*)00 or higher, and which must not be cross-listed with a 4(*alpha*)00 course
4. BIOL 7P95 – taken in the first year after transfer to the PhD
5. one additional BIOL course numbered 5(*alpha*)00 and higher, **which may be a second, different version of BIOL 5P85, 5P86, 5P87 or 5P88 as pre-approved by the supervisory committee and Graduate Program Director**

The thesis supervisor may not offer all the courses in a candidate's program. When appropriate and with prior permission of the supervisory committee, courses offered outside the Department of Biological Sciences may be taken to fulfill course requirements. 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. Note that failing grades (<70%) in graduate courses is sufficient grounds for dismissal from the program.

### Minimum course grades

0-49%	Fail
50-69%	Pass – no graduate credit (course must be replaced or retaken if graduate credit is required)
70-79%	B – graduate credit awarded, insufficient for transfer from MSc to PhD
80-100%	A – required for transfer from MSc to PhD

## Academic Integrity

Graduate students are expected to adhere to the highest of standards during their studies, and according to Brock University's Policy on academic integrity ([https://www.brocku.ca/webfm\\_send/28409](https://www.brocku.ca/webfm_send/28409)). Students should familiarise themselves with the policy, the definitions of plagiarism and with the integrity standards expected of a graduate student. These policies apply to their coursework as well as their written thesis work.

All students are required to act ethically and with integrity in academic matters and demonstrate behaviours that support the university's academic values. These behaviours may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Completing one's own original work;
- b. Knowing and following the appropriate citation method in regard to the use of quotation marks and paraphrasing;
- c. Collaborating appropriately (unless teamwork is permitted, it is prohibited);
- d. Acknowledging the contribution of others (giving credit);
- e. Ensuring that a student's work is not used inappropriately by others;
- f. Acting ethically and with integrity while conducting research and in the reporting of research results; and
- g. Following published examination rules and protocols.

Academic misconduct is a serious offence. The principle of academic integrity, particularly of doing one's own work, documenting properly (including use of quotation marks, appropriate paraphrasing and referencing/citation), collaborating appropriately, and avoiding misrepresentation, is a core principle in university study. Students should consult Section XVII, "Academic Misconduct", in the "Academic Regulations and University Policies" entry in the Graduate Calendar, available at <http://brocku.ca/webcal> to view a fuller description of prohibited actions, and the procedures and penalties.

## Use of Phrase Matching Software

Since the Biology Graduate Handbook covers regulations that deal with the program as well as all pertinent information regarding the thesis, it is appropriate to note that the program reserves the right to use phrase matching software to assess the originality of any submitted written work. This procedure applies to thesis submission (with respect to BIOL 5F90/BIOL 7F90), to pre-doctoral candidacy requirements, to research proposal submissions, or to other written work that is part of the Biological Sciences graduate program. Careful attention will be paid to ensure that original data from research experiments are not included when using the phrase matching software. Instances of plagiarism will be handled according to the Brock University's policy on academic integrity.

## Financial support

Full time students (MSc and PhD) will normally be supported by some combination of provincial or federal scholarships, a research assistantship paid from the research operating grants of supervising faculty, a graduate fellowship from the University, and teaching assistantships in undergraduate courses in the Brock Department of Biological Sciences. In addition, international students may receive bursaries to help offset the cost of higher tuition fees. Students in financial need may qualify for additional bursaries. The purpose of financial support is to allow students to focus on their studies, rather than on undertaking employment unrelated to their studies. The flip side of this is that students should not regard their financial support as an entitlement – it should be regarded as an incentive that needs to be earned.

Note: Graduate fellowships awarded by the Office of Graduate Studies differ according to program and according to whether students receive external fellowships and entrance marks. Students should make sure that they understand exactly how they will be supported and for how long.

Based on NSERC guidelines, the normal periods of financial support from supervisors' grants (in the form of research assistantships) are 2 years for programs that culminate in an MSc thesis and 4 years for programs that culminate in a PhD thesis (which includes MSc time for students who switch).

Research assistantships are normally \$9000 per year. Financial support from supervisors' grants is contingent upon availability of funds and on demonstration of satisfactory work effort and scientific progress. When students are coming near to the end of their period of financial support, supervisors and students should discuss whether further financial support will be provided.

## Composition of thesis supervisory committees

All students are supervised by a thesis committee. 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 occur when the supervisor's primary appointment is not in Biological Sciences. For a MSc involving a co-supervision between a regular program member and an adjunct member, it is optional to have the 2<sup>nd</sup> supervisory committee member, provided that the 1<sup>st</sup> supervisory committee member is a regular program member.

Thesis committees will be chosen according to the following criteria, based on suggestions made by supervisors and subject to agreement by requested faculty. The Graduate Program Director will ensure that the following criteria are fulfilled in assigning thesis committee duties:

1. There are 4 major research areas in the Department. At least one committee member will be from the same research area as the student and supervisor.
2. Thesis supervisory committees consist of the supervisor or co-supervisors plus at least two members of the Biology Graduate Program faculty. At least one of the additional committee members should be from a cognate discipline.
3. Cross-appointed faculty in Biological Sciences may supervise graduate students and may be members of thesis supervisory committees.
4. Adjunct faculty in Biological Sciences may co-supervise graduate students with faculty from Biological Sciences and may be members of thesis supervisory committees.

## Schedule for Supervisory Committee Meetings

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

1. First meeting (planning): preferably within 2 months, no later than 4 months after initial registration
2. First progress meeting: second or third term after initial registration
3. Subsequent progress meetings: minimally one per year.

Supervisory committee meetings must also be held to discuss predoctoral exam topics and for major changes in research plans. When scheduling your committee meeting, please communicate the duration of time to your committee members. Most committee meetings last 1-2 hours in length, so a 2-hour time slot should be scheduled.

**At each meeting, students should present their research plans and progress in the form of a talk.** The presentation should be approximately 30 minutes in length (depending on progress through your degree, this time may be longer if data analysis is extensive) and contain the following information:

1. Title of thesis
2. Project objectives/questions/hypothesis to be researched
3. Background literature discussion to put the project into context of the current understanding in the research field
4. Methodology to be used to answer the research questions
5. Results from your research which will include: samples of raw data, analysed/summarised data, statistical analyses
6. Timeline for project objectives
7. Course work to be taken over the next year

## Monitoring of Graduate Student Progress

Graduate students are responsible for convening their committees for regular meetings.

The first meeting is a research planning meeting. Planning meetings should take place in the first two months after initial registration and no later than the 4<sup>th</sup> month. A second meeting to report initial research progress should be held by the end of the first 12 months of a student's program. Thereafter, meetings should be held at least once per year, or more often if necessary. A committee meeting is also required to plan for the predoctoral exam, and when major changes to a student's program are contemplated, such as a major change to the student's proposed research project.

Graduate students receiving external scholarships must also have a satisfactory yearly Graduate Student External Progress Report Form sent to the scholarship agency by the Graduate Studies Office in order to continue receiving external scholarship funding. This form is available from the university graduate studies website.

Graduate student committee meetings must be documented with the Graduate Student Progress Report Form (available on the Biology web page). **The outcome of the meeting will be summarized by the committee as Excellent, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory.** Students should be aware that it is their responsibility to make sure committee meetings take place, **and that their** progress is monitored by the Biology Graduate Committee. The GPD has the right not to sign course registration forms for students who failed to have the required committee meetings without legitimate reasons.

It is very important that students convene their committees and present evidence of satisfactory research effort and progress. The Graduate Program Committee regularly checks individual student progress as reported on the Graduate Student Progress Form. If no evidence of satisfactory progress is provided, then the Committee will assume that this is because the student has not been making progress. **Also, from time to time, the Faculty of Graduate Studies asks the GPD to confirm satisfactory progress, for instance, when considering applications for bursaries.**



## Academic Probation

The following is an important recent change to the FHB Section 7.13 Graduate Studies and this text is also found in the Graduate Calendar. According to this regulation, when a student's progress is unsatisfactory, supervisory committees can recommend to the Graduate Program Director and Graduate Program Committee, that students be placed on academic probation or even asked to leave the program.

In graduate programs with a research exit requirement (thesis, major essay/research paper), satisfactory academic progress during the research phase will be determined through academic progress reviews by the graduate program committee (normally once per term) as outlined in the program's Graduate Handbook. An Unsatisfactory academic progress decision, as determined by the graduate program committee, may result in a program's decision to place the student on academic probation for the subsequent term or a request for required program withdrawal.

## Predocutorial exam regulations

Enrolment in the Doctor of Philosophy program requires the successful completion of a predocutorial examination. The predocutorial examination will include an oral exam on the student's written research proposal, including the scientific background appropriate to the proposal. The research proposal must be written by the student and must not be read or edited by the Supervisor prior to its final submission, to ensure that the proposal reflects the student's own work. The research proposal must focus on a topic that is not the student's primary research topic but which is in a field related to the PhD research topic. The topic should be chosen in consultation with the thesis supervisory committee at a meeting preceding the predocutorial exam. Normally, students will suggest up to 3 possible topic areas and provide a brief (2 sentence) description of the potential topic areas to their supervisory committee members. The supervisory committee will select and advise on the appropriateness of the proposed topic. Students are allowed no more than 6 weeks to complete the written component of the pre-doctoral exam. The thesis supervisory committee will fill out the Predocutorial Recommendation Form (available on the departmental web page) to approve the topic of the exam and forward this to the Graduate Program Director. The student will submit an electronic copy of the written proposal to the Graduate Program Director within six weeks of the date of topic approval; upon GPD approval, the proposal shall be submitted to the examination committee members for review and evaluation; the scheduled examination date will occur within 3 weeks following this submission, conditional on examination committee approval to proceed with the oral exam.

### *Conditions for the exam*

Before permission is given for the predocutorial exam to proceed, students (both MSc and PhD) should convene their supervisory committee in order to convince them that sufficient research progress has been made up to that point; this is particularly critical for MSc students as they must convince their committees that their academic abilities and achievements up to that point justify switching to the PhD program without first producing an MSc thesis. The supervisory committee will then advise the Graduate Program Director of their decision to grant permission for the predocutorial examination to proceed via the approval of the topic area.

Appeals for exceptions to the above rules require that the thesis supervisory committee present a request supported by appropriate documentation to the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee, who will decide whether or not to grant the exception. The decision of the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee is final.

It is desirable but not mandatory that PhD students complete their course requirements before attempting the predocutorial exam. MSc students must complete all MSc course work with grades of at least 80% **in each course**. Exceptions to this rule may be made if required courses have not been offered in time for students to complete this requirement.

### *Timing of the exam*

For students who enter directly into the PhD program, the predocutorial exam will take place after the second term but no later than the sixth term (third or fourth term is recommended). For students enrolled in the MSc program who wish to switch to the PhD program, the predocutorial exam will take place after the third term but no later than sixth term.

**Important: PhD students who fail to arrange the predocutorial exam before the end of their sixth term, will be deemed to have failed their first attempt at the exam.**

### ***Content of predoctoral research proposal***

The proposal will follow NSERC guidelines and must be formatted as required for Discovery Grant Form 101, including all relevant sections (but NOT including Form 100). Consult the NSERC website for information on how to write a good proposal. Also, make sure you obtain a copy of a successful NSERC grant written by your supervisor as an example of how a proposal should be framed.

**The predoctoral research proposal must be written by the student and must not be read or edited by the supervisor and supervisory committee members prior to its final submission, to ensure that the proposal reflects the student's own work. Students are expected to work independently in writing their proposals, but are allowed to have their peers proofread the last draft before submission. Students may also consult with the Graduate Program Director about issues relating to formatting and grant structure (as opposed to specific content), as well as criteria for the predoctoral evaluation.**

**Note that the proposal must be understandable to a biologist in a different research field.**

#### **1. Topic**

The predoctoral proposal should be on a topic related to but not the same as the PhD research topic. The proposal should be narrow enough in scope that it represents a project that could be used as a backup should the student's primary research project be abandoned, or could be used as a post-doctoral project. As such the topic should be focussed enough that the research proposed could be accomplished in a 3-5 year timeframe.

The topic must be chosen well in advance of the predoctoral exam, and in consultation with the thesis supervisory committee. This information should be relayed to the Graduate Program Director (the appropriate form may be found on the Biology Graduate Studies website). See General Presentation Guidelines for further details and make sure you carefully consult the NSERC Discovery Grants website: [http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Professors-Professeurs/Grants-Subs/DGIGP-PSIGP\\_eng.asp](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Professors-Professeurs/Grants-Subs/DGIGP-PSIGP_eng.asp).

#### **2. Summary of proposal in lay terms**

The summary is intended to explain the proposal in language that the public can understand. Using simple terms, briefly describe the nature of the work to be done. Indicate why and to whom the research is important, the anticipated outcomes, and how your field will benefit. In general, it is desirable to avoid field-specific jargon wherever possible in your proposal (suggested length, 1 page double-spaced).

#### **3. Proposal**

Using the headings below, describe the research to be supported. This section of the proposal is a maximum of 5 pages in length, single-spaced, Times Roman 12 point font. References should be provided in full on additional pages. You may also present up to three figures and tables. Provide details on:

- objectives of the research, both short and long term; hypotheses to be tested, specific predictions
- literature pertinent to the proposal
- methods and proposed approach
- anticipated significance of the work.

#### **References**

- Please use standard and consistent formatting for references.
- Do not refer readers to Web sites for additional information on your proposal.
- Do not introduce hyperlinks into your list of references.
- Make sure you have actually read the references in your proposal – you may be questioned on them in the exam!

### *Predoctoral examining committee*

The Committee consists of the student's supervisory committee plus two faculty members from the Department of Biological Sciences. A majority of the committee members must be tenured faculty, one of whom shall chair the exam. The chair is also an examiner and therefore votes on the outcome.

### *Exam procedures and outcomes*

The examination will consist of two parts, the written research proposal and the oral exam. A student has to pass both parts to pass the predoctoral exam, and has to first pass the written part before proceeding to the oral exam.

Committee members will submit their evaluations with a pass or fail grade (with additional applicable detailed comments) for the written research proposal to the Graduate Program Director no later than 3 days prior to the scheduled oral exam. A pass requires at least 4 members of the committee voting for pass. If the written research proposal fails to pass, the oral exam will be cancelled, and the student will be given ONE chance to revise and resubmit the research proposal, normally within two weeks. The committee's review comments will be communicated to the student via GPD. The committee will be given two weeks to re-evaluate the revised research proposal. If the proposal fails to pass again, the predoctoral exam will be considered as a failure, and the student will not be allowed to re-try.

The oral exams are scheduled for a 3-hour duration, which is longer than most exams last. The exam begins with a 10-minute oral presentation by the candidate, highlighting and summarizing the proposed research. This presentation is followed by rounds of questions from the committee, beginning with the two faculty who do not normally sit on the supervisory committee, and ending with the supervisor. Normally, two rounds of questioning are sufficient, but three rounds of questioning may be necessary.

The outcome of the oral exam will be determined by the votes of the committee (pass or fail). The oral exam is a one-chance exam, thus a failure of the oral exam is also a failure of the predoctoral exam. Voting will proceed as follows (co-supervisory votes together count as a single vote).

1. Students registered in the PhD program: possible outcomes are **Withdraw** or **Continue**.

- **Withdraw from PhD program** - two or more committee members vote to fail (the candidate will be required to withdraw from the program by the end of the current term). This outcome will normally only apply when the committee deems it extremely improbable that the student will be able to independently plan, carry out, and publish a research project.

- **Continue** - at least 4 members of the committee vote for a pass. The student has demonstrated sufficient understanding of the research process, satisfactory understanding of the research topic, and has demonstrated satisfactory scientific, written and oral communications skills, such that the student is clearly ready to independently plan, carry out, and publish a research program. The student may continue in the PhD program.

2. Students registered in the MSc program: possible outcomes are **Remain in MSc** or **Transfer to PhD**

- **Remain in the MSc program** - two or more committee members vote that the candidate will be better served by completing an MSc thesis prior to undertaking a PhD. The student has not demonstrated sufficient understanding of the research process or satisfactory understanding of the research topic, and/or has not demonstrated sufficient ability in either writing or communications skills. The student is not yet ready to independently plan, carry out, and publish a research program.

· **Transfer to PhD** program - at least 4 members of the committee vote for a pass. The criterion for a **pass** is clear evidence of advanced intellectual ability and accomplishment, as indicated by the written proposal and oral exam, such that the committee believes the student will not benefit from the experience of writing an MSc thesis. The student has demonstrated sufficient understanding of the research process, satisfactory understanding of the research topic, and has demonstrated satisfactory scientific, written and oral communications skills, such that the student is clearly ready to independently plan, carry out, and publish a research program. The student, with a successful completion of BIOL5P95, has the option to take BTEC 7P96 (Graduate Seminars) in place of BIOL 7P95 for gaining experience in presenting scientific seminars, with the approvals of the supervisory committee and the GPDs of the Biological Sciences and Biotechnologies.

## Thesis content

The following are general guidelines that reflect what Biology supervisory committees generally deem to be reasonable minima and maxima for thesis content. It is not necessary to include all of the work you did as a graduate student. Your goal is to demonstrate sufficient achievement to justify awarding of the degree.

**MSc thesis:** General introduction, 1-2 data chapters (or chapters representing manuscripts, unpublished or published), general discussion, general conclusions, references, appendices as necessary. Total thesis length about 100-125 pages.

**PhD thesis:** General introduction, 3-5 data chapters (or chapters representing manuscripts, unpublished or published), general discussion, general conclusions, references, appendices as necessary. Total thesis length about 150-200 pages.

Students are responsible for convening their committees in order to regularly apprise them of their progress. The committee will decide when the student has collected sufficient data to complete a thesis. The committee's decision will be indicated on the Graduate Student Progress Form (available from the Biology web site) and forwarded to the Graduate Program Director.

## MSc and PhD thesis procedures

### *Formatting of graduate theses*

The following guidelines are intended to **complement** the requirements of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. An important difference between Biology and FGS is that Biology committees regularly request that all references be collated at the end of the thesis, to improve the clarity of the monograph and to waste less paper. Students who insist on formatting theses their own way are likely to encounter opposition and irritation from committee members (hint: don't do it!).

1. All aspects of thesis formatting should follow the Brock University Library guidelines for E-Thesis Submission at [THESIS FORMAT SPECIFICATIONS AND TABLE OF CONTENTS Copy for Sept 16th Meeting \(brocku.ca\)](#)
2. When printed copies of theses are to be provided for the supervisory and defence committee, they should be printed as double-sided on laser printers. Bound copies of theses in the final version are students' own choices and are no longer required by the Department of Biological Sciences.
3. All typing and other costs of preparing the thesis are the responsibility of the student. Students are not permitted to use the departmental laser printers and photocopiers for printing/duplicating their theses, but can use the printer in the graduate student lounge.
4. Published manuscripts are likely to have different formatting. When included as thesis chapters, one consistent format should be used throughout the thesis, and all references should be compiled at the end of the thesis.

### *Final Draft Submission for Tuition Reduction (Graduate Studies Final Stage Submission)*

Once the student has completed all required courses and completed a final draft of the thesis and it has been reviewed by their supervisor, the student can hand in this first draft to the Graduate Program Director along with the final stage form from graduate studies ([Student forms – Graduate Studies \(brocku.ca\)](#)) to apply for the first draft tuition reduction. **The submission to the GPD should be as a pdf document attached to an email. Note that the tuition reduction is only for ONCE and for ONE term.** The student should request the supervisor to confirm via email to the GPD that they have reviewed the draft to confirm it represents a document that would require less than one term to complete for final review

### ***Internal Thesis Review***

Once the supervisor(s) agree(s) that the thesis 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 Graduate Program Director. The student should provide an electronic copy (preferably a Brock OneDrive URL, especially with the thesis file size over 3Mb) of the thesis in MS Word format to the GPD.

The GPD forwards the thesis file or the OneDrive link to the committee who will evaluate it and decide whether it is ready for external review. The internal review process normally takes three weeks (see below for black-out periods), and if a substantial delay in completing the review is expected, the committee member is encouraged to let the GPD know. If the student is required to make major revisions during the internal review process, it may take longer than three weeks. Each committee member forwards comments to the Graduate Program Director who forwards them to the student unless other arrangements made with the approval of the GPD. 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***

Final copy of the thesis gets submitted to the Graduate Program Director electronically.

For PhD theses, a list of potential Brock internal external examiners (who must be tenured members of the Graduate Faculty, but not members of the Biological Sciences graduate program) should also be submitted. The Graduate Program Director chooses the Brock internal external examiner.

The supervisor and student must also complete a list of three potential external examiners and their contact information, ranked in order of preference, and submit to the GPD. A form for this is on the graduate studies website. The list of potential external examiners is forwarded to the appropriate Dean 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 Defence and Internal Reviews***

Two times of the year are set aside where no thesis defences or internal review procedures will take place. This is to accommodate normal holiday practise and alleviate scheduling difficulties at common university closure periods.

Summer black-out: August 15<sup>th</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup>

Winter black-out: December 18<sup>th</sup> to January 3<sup>rd</sup>

Note that students should not submit theses for internal review within these time periods. If submitting prior to these time periods, the “3 week” clock will stop at these time points and return to normal patterns after the duration of the black-out period. Students are advised to plan ahead. For example, if you wished to defend your thesis on September 1, you would have to submit for external review around the end of June. Likewise, if you wanted to defend on January 5th, you would need to submit for external review by ~November 5th. Remember to add at least 3 weeks for the internal review before that.



## MSc defence format

### *Examining Committee makeup*

– examining committee chair (Dean of Mathematics and Science or Dean's delegate), external examiner, thesis supervisor, and two departmental representatives (normally the two departmental members that were on the supervisory committee). The biology graduate program will continue to use external examiners from outside Brock University.

### *Format of exam*

- Exam chair introduces committee and candidate, explains the format of the defence.
- 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.
- After a short break, the examination begins. Audience may remain but may not ask questions.
- Order of questioning is usually external examiner, 1<sup>st</sup> departmental representative, 2<sup>nd</sup> departmental representative, supervisor. The chair of the examining committee is not required to participate in the questioning period.
- The questioning period is normally about 2 hours, consisting of two rounds of questioning by the examining committee. However, the exam may be longer if the committee deems it necessary.
- When the committee is satisfied with the questioning, 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, who is the Associate Dean of Mathematics and Science or designate) 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 (usually, 2 votes for pass, 2 votes for fail), the vote of the external examiner will be the outcome of the exam.

## PhD defence format

### *Examining Committee makeup*

– examining committee chair (Dean of Graduate Studies or delegate), external examiner, Brock internal examiner, thesis supervisor, and two departmental representatives (normally the two departmental members who were on the supervisory committee). Note that for PhD exams, video attendance by the external examiner is not acceptable except in case of last minute travel emergencies.

### *Format of the thesis defense oral exam*

- Exam chair introduces committee and candidate, explains the format of the defence.
- Candidate presents a research seminar, around 30 minutes in length.
- Floor is open to questions from the audience.
- This is followed by a short break (and refreshments).
- The oral defence proceeds. Audience may remain but may not ask questions during the defence.
- Order of questioning is usually external examiner, internal examiner, 1<sup>st</sup> departmental representative, 2<sup>nd</sup> departmental representative, supervisor. The chair of the examining committee is not required to participate in the questioning period.
- The questioning period will normally consist of two rounds of questioning by the examining committee, but additional rounds may be required.
- When the committee is satisfied with the questioning, 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 PhD oral exam*

All members of the examining committee, excluding the committee chair, will vote on the outcome of the exam, for a total of 5 votes (6 votes if the student is co-supervised). The Chair (who is the Dean of Graduate Studies or the Dean's designate) does not vote.

Pass - at least 4 of 5 or 5 of 6 voting members of the committee vote to pass. The alternative is Fail.

In the event of a tie vote, the vote of the external examiner will be the outcome of the exam.

### **After the thesis defence**

There are several things that still need to be done after the defense in order for students to graduate.

1. A variety of copyright forms must be filled out and signed by the student. Usually this happens immediately following the thesis defense.
2. The committee may require thesis revisions. These are mandatory and must be submitted by the date decided on at the exam. The exam decision form that is signed by the committee is only signed by the supervisor after the revisions have been submitted.
3. Students shall supply their supervisors with copies of the data used in the thesis, as well as other data that were collected in the course of the graduate program, even if they were not included in the thesis. Supervisors are co-owners of data produced in their research labs. Failure to provide data files, copies of field notes, copies of lab books, etc. as requested, may result in a delay in the processing of final paperwork to enable convocation.

Graduate Studies and the University may have additional requirements, such as payment of outstanding fees.

## Data ownership and publication rights

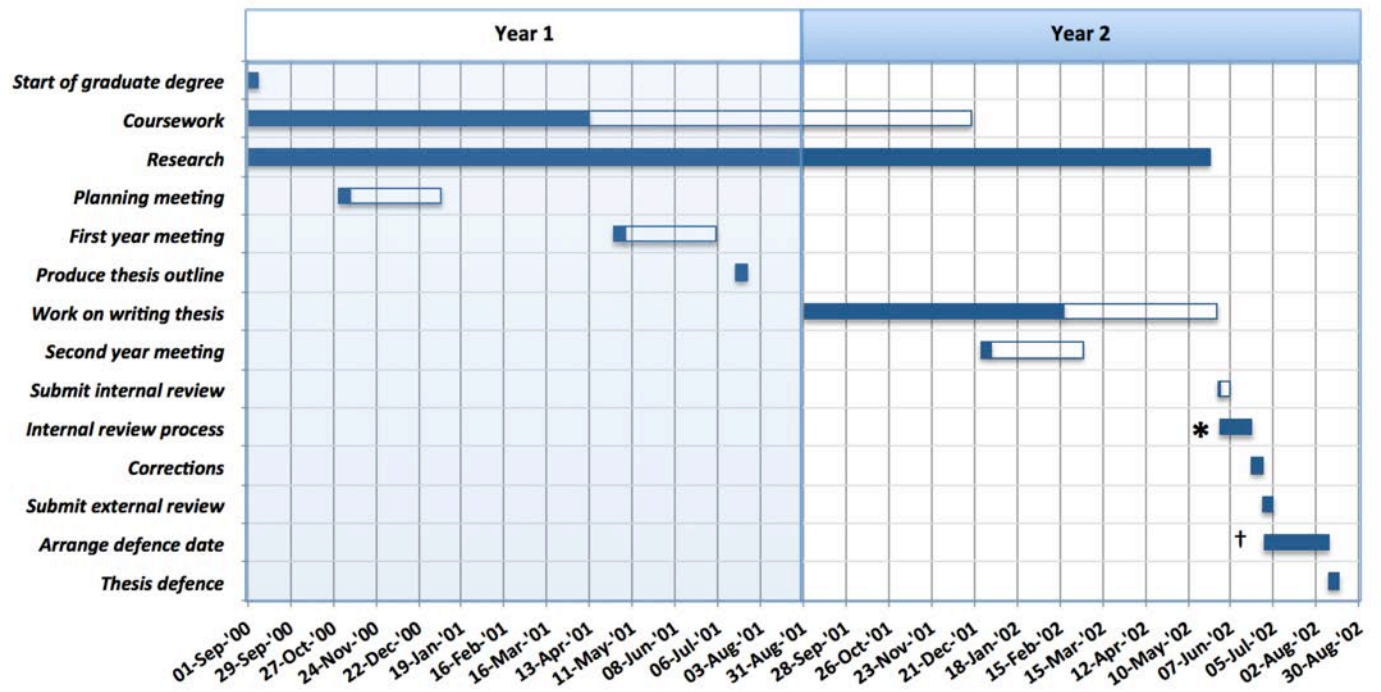
Data collected during the course of graduate program belong to both the graduate student and the supervisor. Original data records, including lab books and field books, belong to the supervisor's research program and must remain with the supervisor when the student leaves, unless the student has specifically been given permission to take them. Students are, of course, entitled to keep copies of original data records. Students should submit complete copies of their data to their supervisors at the point of internal review. **The Graduate Program Director will sign off on completion of degree requirements only after supervisors advise that they have received complete versions of all required data, lab books, field books, etc.**

All graduate students are encouraged to produce manuscripts for publication based on their graduate work or any other research that may have been conducted in the course of their graduate program. Graduate students should be aware that first authorship, even for manuscripts based on their thesis, is not automatic, and should discuss with their supervisors how authorship will be assigned. Graduate students who do wish to write manuscripts based on data they collected as part of their graduate research will normally have one year following their departure from the program to provide a complete first manuscript draft of any data they wish to publish. After one year, supervisors may elect to proceed with publication themselves.

Temporal Milestones for Full-Time MSc Students

Timeline for MSc - September Start

Recommended Date Range  
 Acceptable Date Range

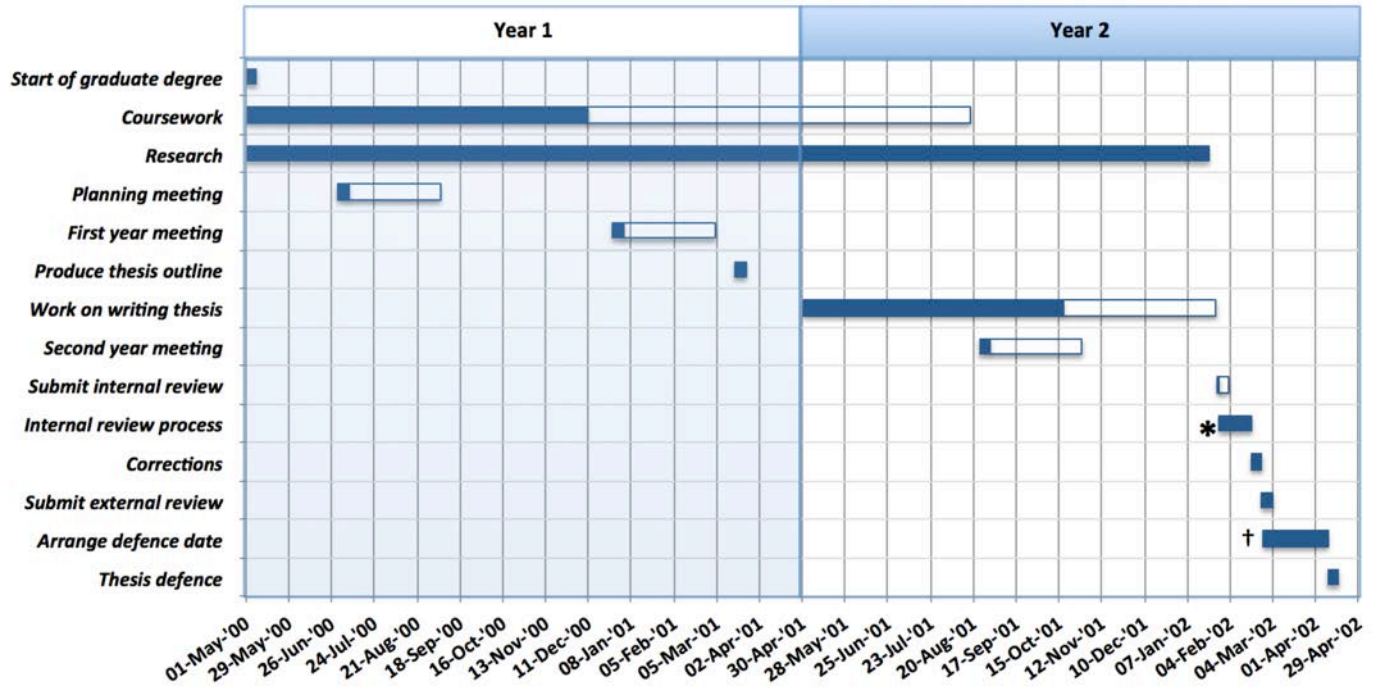


\* allow 3 weeks for the internal review

† allow up to 6 weeks to arrange thesis defence

### Timeline for MSc - May Start

Recommended Date Range  
 Acceptable Date Range

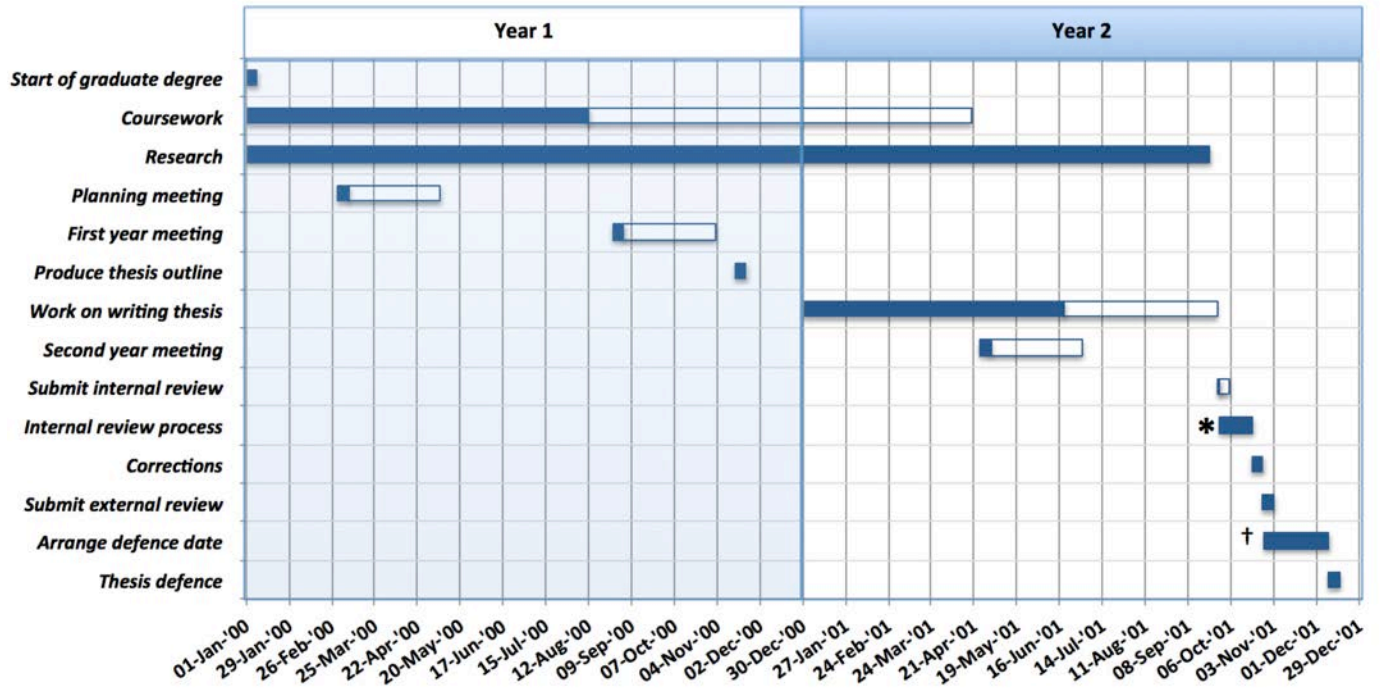


\* allow 3 weeks for the internal review

† allow up to 6 weeks to arrange thesis defence

### Timeline for MSc - January Start

Recommended Date Range  
 Acceptable Date Range



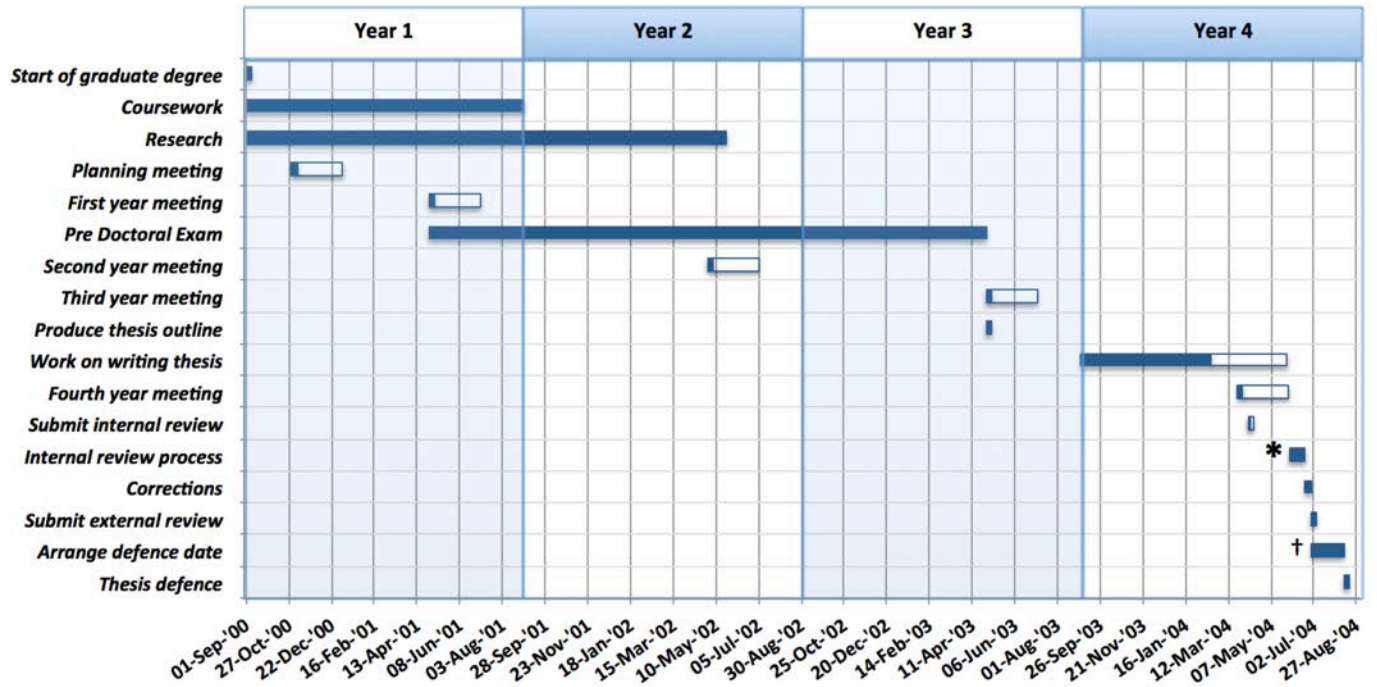
\* allow 3 weeks for the internal review

† allow up to 6 weeks to arrange thesis defence

### Temporal Milestones for PhD Students

#### Timeline for PhD - September Start

Recommended Date Range  
 Acceptable Date Range



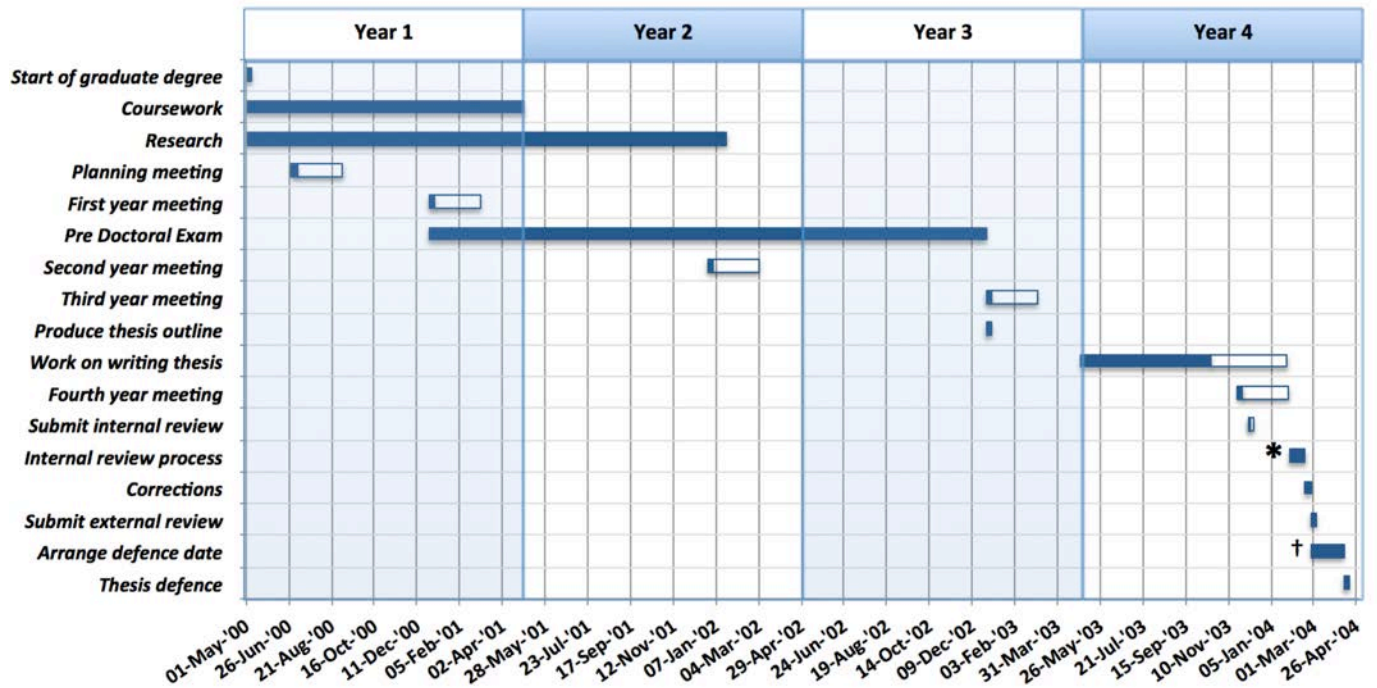
\* allow 3 weeks for the internal review

† allow up to 6 weeks to arrange thesis defence



### Timeline for PhD - May Start

Recommended Date Range  
 Acceptable Date Range

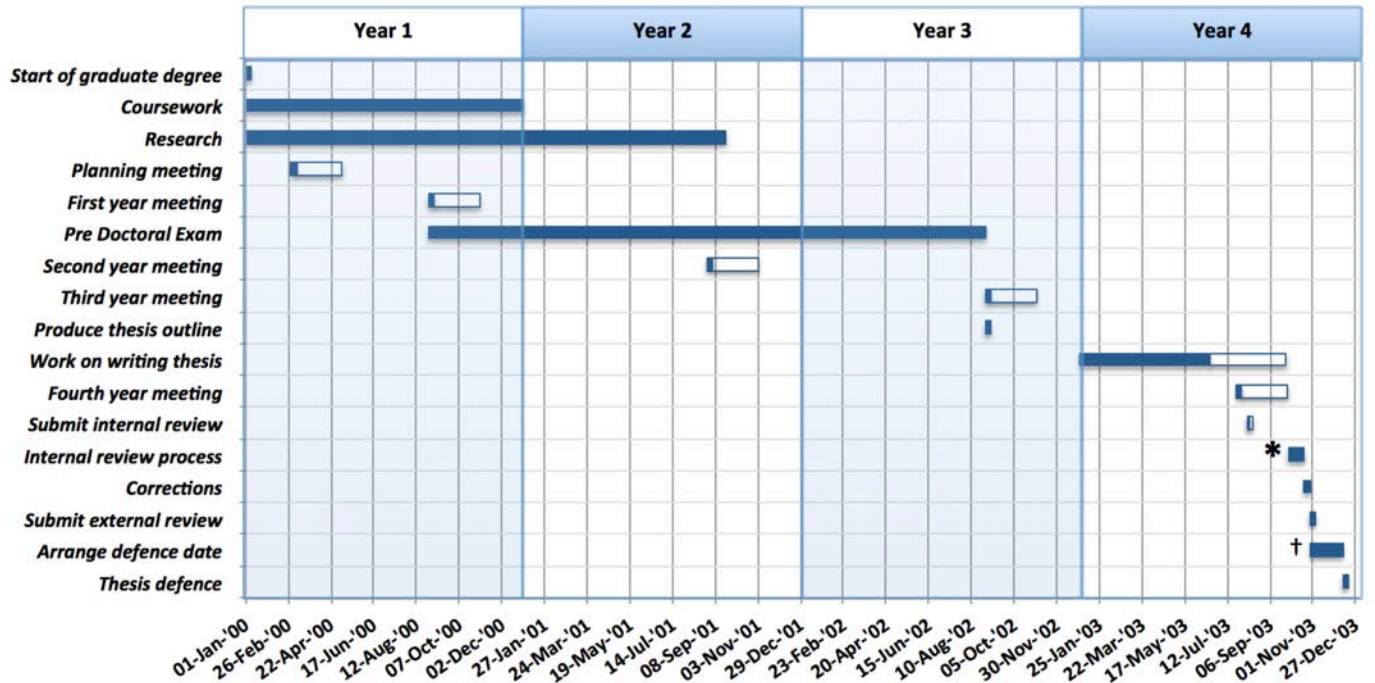


\* allow 3 weeks for the internal review

† allow up to 6 weeks to arrange thesis defence

### Timeline for PhD - January Start

Recommended Date Range  
 Acceptable Date Range



\* allow 3 weeks for the internal review

† allow up to 6 weeks to arrange thesis defence