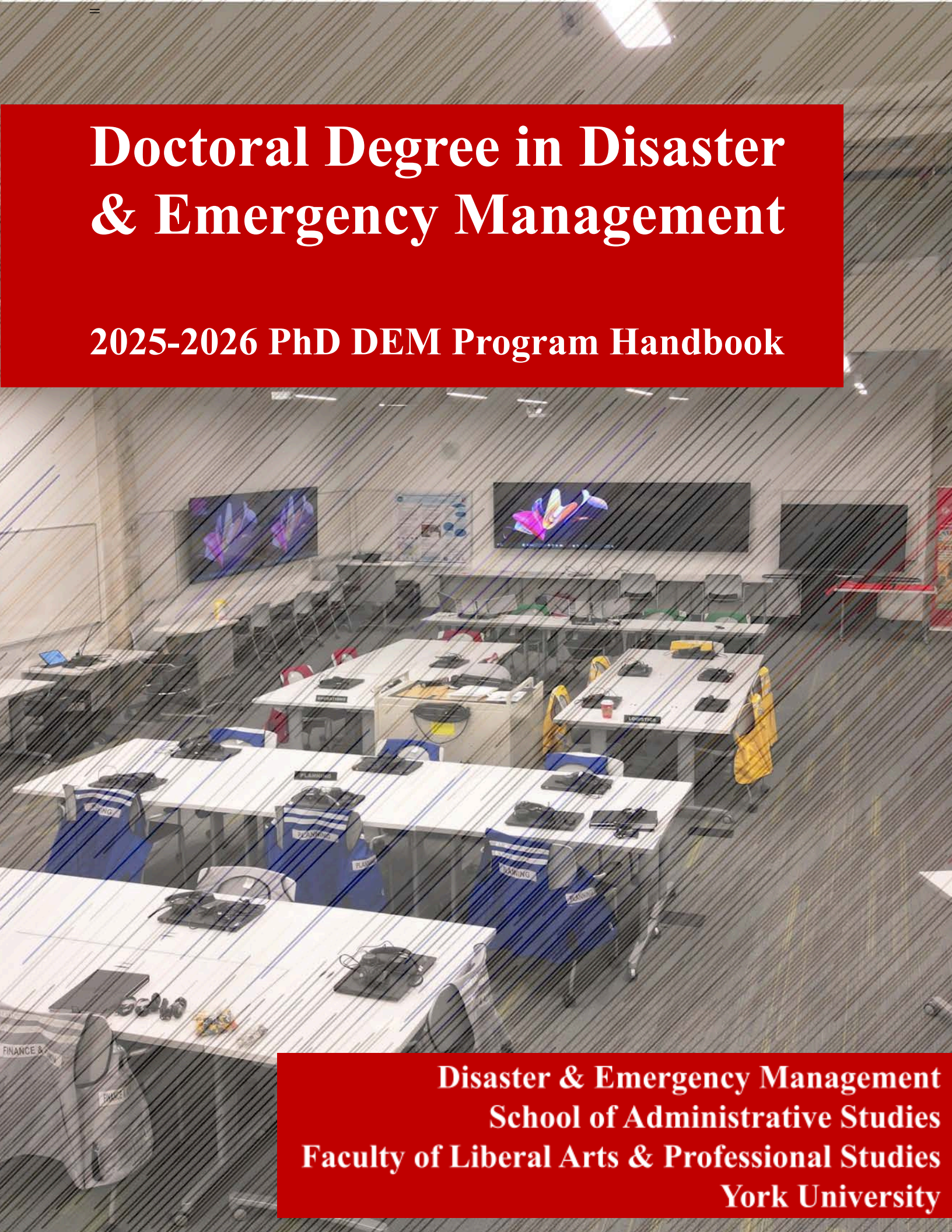
Doctoral Degree in Disaster & Emergency Management

2025-2026 PhD DEM Program Handbook



Disaster & Emergency Management
School of Administrative Studies
Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies
York University

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Welcome to the Program

Dear PhD DEM Student,

It is with utmost pleasure that I welcome you to York University's Disaster and Emergency Management (DEM) Program for the year 2025. As a member of our inaugural doctoral cohort, you are embarking on an academic journey that holds immense potential for growth and success. Your DEM professors are eager to see you succeed, thrive, grow, and enjoy your experience with us. We have crafted a comprehensive and unique program that we believe will provide you with a wealth of opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom, throughout your time with us.

Undoubtedly, what you will learn through your interaction with our research-active faculty in your classes, and as you progress through the various academic components of your degree, is foundational to developing expertise in the field. However, to get the most of your experience, we encourage you to see your graduate studies as all-encompassing. Please consider participating in our annual table-top exercise and training, attend our weekly Disaster Seminars through Y-EMERGE, register for events hosted by CIFAL-York and ADERSIM, and seek out opportunities to volunteer and engage with the Canadian Journal of Disaster & Emergency Management (CJEM). Your DEM professors are leading these initiatives across the university with your growth and development in mind. Please also consider getting involved with DEMSA - our graduate student's association.

As I'm sure you have already realized, we lean heavily on our amazing Graduate Program Assistant (GPA), Sabina Lackner, for the smooth running of the program. Sabina has been with the program since 2006, resulting in decades of experience, and is of great support to all our graduate students and faculty. Sabina and I are here to listen to your concerns and needs. Please feel free to reach out to us if there is anything we can assist you with. Together, we will work towards ensuring that you progress through the program in a timely manner.

Welcome once again to the Disaster and Emergency Management family at York University. I wish you all the best of luck on this exciting journey ahead.

Warm regards,

Dr. Aaida Mamuji
Associate Professor & Graduate Program Director
Disaster & Emergency Management

1.0 About Us

This is your small yet mighty DEM Team at York University:

From left to right, Professors Ali Asgary, Eric Kennedy, Jennifer Spinney (*Undergrad Area Coordinator*), Evalyna Bogdan, Aaida Mamuji (*Graduate Program Director*), Jack Rozdilsky and Nirupama Agrawal. We also rely heavily on our program staff Sabina Lackner (*Graduate Program Assistant*).

Some of our courses are taught by part-time course directors. For the 2025-2026 academic year, these include:

- Prof David Etkin - Disaster & Ethics (Prof Etkin is one of our DEM program founders!)
- Yundi Chen - Quantitative Methods
- Prof Kelly Thomson - Qualitative Methods
- Andrew Moull and Ian Attard - DEM in Healthcare

We are also lucky to have two Visiting Scholars on board. These include the highly acclaimed Dr. Kathleen Tierney, and Dr. Liton Chakraborty, who currently works for Employment and Social Development Canada.

Our program is underpinned by five program pillars, which reflect our core principles. We are:

1. **Interdisciplinary**
   Our program encourages interdisciplinary research and collaboration across various departments and fields of study, particularly given the diversity of hazards facing the natural and built environment, and society at large.

2. **Holistic**
   We view disaster and emergency management through a comprehensive lens, addressing all stages of complex challenges from mitigation, preparedness, response through to recovery, recognizing their interconnectedness and with attention to root causes and drivers of vulnerability.

3. **Analytical**
   We promote critical thinking and encourage our students to investigate existing assumptions and power dynamics, and to appreciate the impact of context and future directions.

4. **Strategic**
   We recognize the importance of effective risk assessment, decision support, leadership, planning and policy, in creating resilient and inclusive communities and societies.

5. **Solutions-Oriented**
   Our program is solutions-oriented and emphasizes practical, collaborative, and flexible approaches to manage disasters and emergencies, including through the use of innovative technology.

2.0 Introduction to the Handbook

We are thrilled to have you in the inaugural cohort of the PhD in Disaster and Emergency Management. We have been working on this program for almost a decade now, from developing proposals to hiring new faculty members; from external reviewer visits to recruiting this very first cohort. We are incredibly excited for you to join us, and hope that the amount of thought and planning that has gone into this program will provide you with an excellent learning experience.

At the same time, we also recognize that we will all be learning through this journey, and that adaptations, corrections, and adjustments will need to be made as we inevitably encounter new circumstances or discover that plans were not ideal. We request your flexibility in advance and will do everything that we can to ensure that any adjustments are made in a way that serves your best interests as a student in the program.

As such, there are a few things that you should keep in mind as you read through this handbook:

- This handbook has been carefully written to reflect the degree and general requirements as expressed in York University policy and the academic calendar. But, in the event of any disagreement between the two, we will need to defer to York policy and the academic calendar. If you notice any errors, please inform us right away so we can sort them out.
- Your 'terms and conditions' as a student are based on the policy, academic calendar, and handbook of the academic year when you began the program. For example, we may change the processes or reading lists for comprehensive exams for the next cohort – but you will still progress through them as laid out when you entered the program. If you wish to be bound by more recent terms (e.g., an updated handbook), please contact the graduate program director (GPD).
- If any changes are made to this handbook after the first day of classes for Fall 2025, an updated version will be circulated by the graduate program assistant with changes highlighted.
- Please use the "comment" function to ask questions or note places where more detail could be useful.

List of changes since Orientation Day, 2025.

None yet.

3.0 Overview of Major Milestones

During your journey through the PhD program, you will be responsible for three major program elements: your coursework, your comprehensive exams, and your dissertation. Each of these major elements has subtasks, like your dissertation requiring a prospectus, research, the written dissertation itself, and the dissertation defense. The sections that follow lay out these details.

There are also additional priorities you'll need to pursue beyond the formal curriculum and minimum expectations. For example, you may want to present at conferences and publish your research (discuss both with your supervisor ahead of time). You'll need to factor in applying to jobs and time for building professional networks and earning references. While these are not noted in the milestones chart below, they will be very important to prioritize and integrate into your planning from Day 1 in the program.

For a full-time (FT) student in the program, the normal completion time is **five years**. For a part-time (PT) student, the normal completion time is **eight years.** Students are encouraged to complete major milestones sooner than expected when they are able to. This is most relevant for the proposal defense and completion of the final dissertation. For part-time students in particular, if they feel that they are able to complete their comprehensive exams sooner than listed, they may request an earlier exam date.

Please note that for doctoral students at York University's Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS), the typical timeline for completing degree requirements, including coursework and dissertation, is within 18 terms (6 years) of initial registration, according to York University's regulations. This includes maintaining continuous registration and paying the appropriate fees until graduation. Given that the expected timeline of completion for our PT students exceeds this, it will be the responsibility of the student to petition for extension and maintaining of PT status beyond these years.

The follow tables highlight the major milestones to completion for both full-time and part-time tracks:

Normal Timelines and Progress: Full-Time, 5 years

Term	**Year 1** (2025-2026)	**Year 2** (2026-2027)	**Year 3** (2027-2028)	**Year 4** (2028-2029)	**Year 5** (2029-2030)
Fall	1) DEMS 7700 Part 1: Risk, Vulnerability and Resilience 2) DEMS 7740 Quantitative Methods in Disaster and Emergency Management 3) DEMS or dissertation-related elective	1) DEMS 7750 Research Design & Dissertation Brief Development 2) DEMS 7790: Teaching, Learning, and Pedagogy ***Provide your specialized list (Nov 15)***	Latest deadline for dissertation proposal (Dec 15)		
Winter	1) DEMS 7701 Part 2: Research and Practice in Disaster and Emergency Management 2) DEMS 7730 Qualitative Methods in Disaster and Emergency 3) DEMS or dissertation-related elective	Comprehensive exams (April)	Dissertation research underway		Latest deadline for defence scheduling. Revisions as required.
Summer	1) DEMS or dissertation-related elective ***Establish supervisory committee (May 31)***				

*Normal Timelines and Progress: Part-Time, 8 years**

**The below timeline for PT students includes two courses being taken in the first Fall and Winter terms. Depending on capacity, students can enroll in more than one course per semester. Conversely, students may opt to take only one course per term, which would delay completion of coursework.*

Term	**Year 1** (2025-2026)	**Year 2** (2026-2027)	**Year 3** (2027-2028)	**Year 4** (2028-2029)	**Year 5 - 7** (2029-2032)	**Year 8** (2032-3033)
Fall	1) DEMS 7700: Risk, Vulnerability and Resilience (Required) 2) DEMS 7740 Quantitative Methods in Disaster and Emergency Management	1) DEMS 7790: Teaching, Learning, and Pedagogy (Required)	1) DEMS 7750 Research Design & Dissertation Brief Development (Required) ***Provide your specialized list (Nov 15)***		Dissertation research underway	
Winter	1) DEMS 7701: Research and Practice in Disaster and Emergency Management (Required) 2) DEMS 7730 Qualitative Methods in Disaster and Emergency	1) DEMS or dissertation-related elective Management ***Establish supervisory committee (Mar 1)***	Comprehensive exams (April)			Latest deadline for defence scheduling. Revisions as required.
Summer	1) DEMS or dissertation-related elective	1) DEMS or dissertation-related elective		Latest deadline for dissertation proposal (Aug 15)		

4.0 A Detailed Look at Program Elements

4.1 Coursework

As part of the PhD program, you are expected to complete nine classes in total (which are worth 27 'credits' in York's accounting). These courses represent a variety of key skills for you to acquire, essential theoretical paradigms for joining the community of scholars in DEM, and opportunities to acquire specialist knowledge for your specific dissertation and project. These courses are:

- ***DEMS 7700 & DEMS 7701 (3.0 + 3.0 credits):*** This year-long seminar is a core class in the theory of disaster and emergency management. In 7700 ("Risk, Vulnerability, and Resilience"), you will encounter key theories in the field. In 7701 ("Research and Practice in Disaster & Emergency Management"), you will explore how disaster and emergency management is studied from different disciplinary traditions.
- ***DEMS 7730 & 7740 (3.0 + 3.0 credits):*** These are the qualitative and quantitative methods courses, providing key skills for conducting your dissertation research.
- ***DEMS 7750 (3.0 credits):*** This course, "Research Design and Dissertation Development," provides a place to integrate the theoretical and methodological skills you have been developing in the context of your dissertation proposal. The course will help you to take your dissertation idea and develop a successful project design, as well as to write a proposal for defense.
- ***DEMS 7790 (3.0 credits):*** This course, "Teaching, Learning, and Pedagogy," will help to equip you with the skills required to be an effective instructor in both academic and practitioner settings. This will be immediately useful for your work as a teaching assistant, but will also set you up for success in your career whether you choose academic or practitioner paths.
- ***Electives (3.0 credits x 3, 9.0 credits total):*** In conjunction with your supervisor, you will select three elective courses that support your development in areas of expertise required for your dissertation.

For a full-time student in the program, the normal expectation is that coursework is finished by the end of the second Fall semester in the program. For a part-time student, the normal expectation is that coursework will be finished by the end of the third Fall semester in the program.

Your electives should be decided in collaboration with your supervisor to ensure that they are well aligned with preparing you for your dissertation. Students should take an active role in identifying courses that might serve this function well, but should discuss these ideas well in advance with their supervisor, before enrolling in electives. Your supervisor's support can also be useful in gaining access to classes that might be otherwise restricted. You may apply to take courses anywhere at York, or at other universities in Canada – but communicate proactively with your supervisor and the GPD to ensure this fits all guidelines and requirements before making commitments.

Please note that there are some DEM elective courses that are **not** available for PhD students, namely the internship and directed readings courses:

- The internship course has too many credits to fit into the PhD program and is geared towards shorter experiences in the field. Instead, you should work with your supervisor to identify ways that are more appropriate for you to work in experiential experiences to your doctoral journey.
- In the PhD, directed reading takes place through the comprehensive exam process rather than a directed reading course. The intellectual development as students engage in class discussions and learn from others and their instructor in classes is invaluable.

4.2 Establishing a Supervisory Committee

During your admission process, you were linked with a provisional supervisor. As you begin in the program, you should work closely with this supervisor to begin to flesh out your project, select your electives, and discuss your supervisory committee membership. You can learn more about recommendations for a successful supervisory relationship in Section 4.

While the aim is that you will stay with this provisional supervisor, in the event that this is not a good ongoing match, we encourage you to speak proactively with the GPD to discuss options.

Per University rules, your "dissertation supervisory committee will consist of a minimum of three members from the Faculty of Graduate studies, at least two of whom must be members of the graduate program in which the student is enrolled." Note that all DEM faculty (Agrawal, Asgary, Bogdan, Kennedy, Mamuji, Rozdilsky, Spinney) are members of FGS and of the graduate program, and therefore eligible to serve as supervisor and committee members. Adjunct members of the DEM program can typically serve as a second committee member, but not a supervisor, and in some cases as a co-supervisor. The third member can be from any graduate program across York with approval of your supervisor or, in "exceptional circumstances" and with the Dean of FGS' approval, can be a non-FGS member. To learn more about these different types of membership, see this FGS Documentation.

Your selection of your supervisory committee requires a "Supervisor and Supervisory Committee Approval Form," which can be found here. We strongly recommend this committee be established by the Summer of first year for FT students and the Winter of the second year for PT students, as this committee is involved in establishing your personalized comprehensive exam reading list (see below). There is also paperwork available at the same link if you need to change committee membership.

4.3 Comprehensive Exams

Comprehensive exams serve two roles in the program:

- First, they are meant to provide an opportunity to engage with a breadth of scholarship at a depth that is rarely possible in normal academic or practitioner life. By having us all read a common curriculum, we develop a shared set of theories, methods, concepts, and tools as an emerging profession and discipline of study.
- Second, they serve an assessment function: they test whether you have a sufficient command of the literature to both be considered a burgeoning expert in DEM (e.g. could you effectively teach the classes in this field if you became a professor) and in your area of specialization (e.g. do you have enough theoretical depth and understanding to be able to contribute to knowledge production).

In our program, there are two different examinations you complete: (1) a shared, common list that unifies the whole program, and (2) a specialized list that is developed with your committee to ensure preparedness for your area of specialization and dissertation research. The common list consists of approximately 50-70 books (wherein one book can be substituted by roughly three articles) and is set at a cohort-wide level. Each student's specialized list will be comprised of roughly 40-60 books, with the same similar conversion ratio.

The written component of the common exam is evaluated by a common DEM program Comprehensive Examination Committee. In contrast, the specialized exam (written and oral) is evaluated by the student's supervisory committee. Outcomes can include a clear pass (i.e. no revisions needed), a conditional pass (i.e. portions of the written or oral defense must be resubmitted), a failure with an option to rewrite, or a failure with recommended withdrawal from the program.

To remain in the program following a "fail with rewrite" result, the student must retake the requisite exams (same reading list but different questions) in the following October and achieve an assessment of either "clear pass" or "conditional pass." Students are allowed to appeal the results of their assessment to the Comprehensive Examination

Committee in writing within 14 calendar days of the release of results from the first set of exams. Any subsequent appeals, or appeals made in reference to the rewritten exam, must follow the petition procedures laid out by the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

The common list can be found digitally at this link. For this first year, the common list is approximately 80% finalized, but students are invited to provide feedback on additions to this list through a process that will conclude by October 15th, 2025. To suggest an additional article or book, please email Dr. Eric Kennedy at ebk@yorku.ca.

The specialized list is developed by the student and committee, and must be submitted with the supervisory committee's approval by November 15 of the year the exam will occur (normally second year for a FT student and third year for a PT student).

Each exam has a written component (made up of 2-3 long-answer questions designed to ascertain the student's grasp of the material). The common written exam is conducted in-person with a shared set of questions determined by the program-wide Comprehensive Exam Committee, while the specialized written exam is conducted remotely with questions determined by the supervisory committee. The oral defense will both seek to clarify answers from the written portion, as well as to ask more comprehensive questions about the remainder of the list and its applicability to the student's planned dissertation project. This oral defense is adjudicated by your supervisory committee. A recommended book to prepare for the examination is *Oral Exams* by Dr. Lee Foote.

The expected timelines for this process are as follows, articulated according to academic year (i.e. September to August):

	Full Time	Part Time
Common list provided	Orientation day, Year 1 (NB for first cohort: Feedback opportunity until October 15th)	
Establish membership of your supervisory committee	May 31, Year 1	March 1, Year 2
Student submits initial proposal for specialized list (description of area of focus, importance, scope, and 10-20 sample items)	August 15, Year 1	August 15, Year 2
Student submits full specialized list	November 15, Year 2	November 15, Year 3

Writing of common exam (in-person, locked down)	Second week of April, Year 2 (NB: in person)	Second week of April, Year 3 (NB: in person)
Writing of specialized exam (take home)	Fourth week of April, Year 2	Fourth week of April, Year 3 (NB: in person)
Feedback from written common exam returned to supervisory committee	May 1, Year 2	May 1, Year 3
Oral defense of both common and specialized exam, conducted by supervisory committee	After common exam grading/feedback returned; no later than May 30, Year 2	After common exam grading/feedback returned; no later than May 30, Year 3
Rewrite opportunity if needed	October, Year 3	October, Year 4

4.4 Proposal

Before beginning the dissertation research, a dissertation proposal must be completed by the student and approved by the committee. This proposal should be submitted for approval in December of Year 3 for a full-time student and August of Year 4 for a part-time student.

At a minimum, the proposal should contain a brief statement on the purpose/goals of the thesis/dissertation research, its relationship to existing work in the area through an abbreviated literature review, the research question(s), the proposed methodologies with rationale, and the contribution which the researcher hopes to make to the advancement of knowledge in the field. In addition, the proposal includes a title, the name of the supervisor and the supervisory committee. It is expected that dissertation approaches will evolve, but the proposal should represent a realistic plan. Proposals should typically be between 3,000 and 3,500 words.

Supervisors and supervisory committees are expected to have a meeting and/or informal defense with the student to discuss the proposal, advice for success in the project, and any changes or adjustments needed prior to supervisory committee approval and submission to the GPD.

Note that any proposals involving the need for ethics clearance are required to submit these materials alongside the proposal; see Form TD1 below.

Dissertation proposals must first be approved by the supervisory committee. Once approved, they are submitted to the GPD for confirmation that faculty and internal program requirements have been satisfied. The GPD will then submit the proposal using Form TD1 to FGS.

4.5 Dissertation

PhD candidates will be required to complete a dissertation in the field of Disaster and Emergency Management. This dissertation must demonstrate a mastery of their area of specialization and must make a contribution to the field. A 'contribution to the field' is measured, in broad terms, as something that has – or would be likely to – merit publication under stringent peer-review standards in a major journal in DEM or a related field. Students have a responsibility for obtaining ethics clearance for their work in accordance with Faculty and University requirements.

There are two formats for a dissertation in the doctoral program in Disaster and Emergency Management: a traditional monograph or an article-based dissertation. In both formats, the student must demonstrate a mastery of the relevant literature, a clear understanding of their theoretical and/or empirical question and contribution, and a high-quality set of results and analysis. Dissertation projects that take on applied questions of importance to practitioners and real-world challenges in rigorous, theoretically, and methodologically suitable ways are welcomed.

An article-based dissertation must include at least three articles of a quality sufficient to subsequently be published in a peer-reviewed journal. The article-based dissertation must also be accompanied by a strong introduction and conclusion that justify their relatedness and establish a clear program of study that spans the three papers. The student must play the role of lead author for all articles (it is expected that in many cases, the supervisor and/or members of the supervisory committee may be coauthors, see section 4.2 below). On no more than one article, the work may be co-authored with others beyond the committee, but the student must play the lead role and co-authors must be able to provide a written declaration of the student's primary role in all the elements of the paper (including project design, data collection, analysis, writing, and editing).

In both formats, there are common and high expectations. Both forms of dissertations should yield data and analysis that is of quality that could be published in a peer-reviewed journal. Both forms of dissertations should establish a program of study

that is coherent and makes both theoretical and empirical contributions to the discipline. Both forms are expected to contain key elements (e.g. situating the research question; conducting a thorough literature review; outline research methods; robust analysis and discussion; making clear theoretical and empirical contributions to the discipline; etc).

The decision of which format to undertake requires close consultation with – and ultimately approval from – the supervisor and supervisory committee. Students are encouraged to work with their supervisory committee to establish a provision plan for dissemination (e.g. peer reviewed publication) of the dissertation material during and after the PhD in support of both advancing the field and supporting the student's successful transition into a career. Technical specifications for the dissertation (e.g. formatting, sections, and abstract) should be produced in compliance with Faculty of Graduate Studies guidelines. Students and their supervisory committees are also responsible for following FGS requirements in terms of deadlines for manuscript submission and scheduling key milestones like the oral defense.

Students are strongly recommended to familiarize themselves with the FGS guidelines for dissertations, which includes both general guidance about the dissertation as a whole and important specific technical instructions about formatting.

4.6 Dissertation Defense

All students in the program will be required to complete an oral defense of their dissertation per Faculty of Graduate Studies guidelines. Note that the examination committee consists of at least five voting members: the Dean of FGS or their representative; an external examiner; an FGS member from outside of the program; and two FGS members from the supervisory committee.

The oral examination is normally held no less than 20 business days from the date copies of the completed dissertation approved by the supervisory committee are sent to each member of the examination committee.

More details about the oral examination process can be found on the FGS website.

5.0 Overview of Relationship with Supervisor & Committee

A healthy relationship between graduate students and their supervisors is key to success.

5.1 Guidelines & Checklists

There are several guidelines and checklists available for graduate students and their supervisors to review (outlined below). A recommendation is to review these documents together, and write the initials and date of the review on them, one copy for the student and one for the supervisor, and keep the documents on record.

The Doctoral Supervision website outlines the following topics:

- Graduate Supervision Guidelines
  - Guidelines for Supervisors
  - Guidelines for Students
- Role of the Graduate Program Office in Graduate Supervision
- Doctoral Dissertation Supervisory Committees
- Annual Progress Reports (there is no template provided here, however, the Supervisor and Supervisory portal has links to the Progress Report for both students and supervisors)
- Conflict Resolution
- Discussion Topics to Inform Productive Supervisory Relationships
- Many more resources and topics

Supervisors and students should prioritize the following documents:

- The FGS Strong Start to Supervision Checklist (this includes an Individualized Development Plan (IDP))
- Graduate Studies Portal: The Graduate Supervisor and Supervisory Committee (SSC) Portal is where graduate students submit a request to establish a supervisor and supervisory committee (also has additional resources).

- More documents can be found at this link: YU Grad Supervision Resources

York University's Faculty of Graduate Studies endorses the 2023 Ontario Council on Graduate Studies' Principles for Graduate Supervision at Ontario Universities. The Principles for Graduate Supervision at Ontario Universities document outlines responsibilities for the graduate student, the supervisor, the supervisory committee, and various university departments. All parties are expected to adhere to the values of integrity (accountability), inclusion, and collaboration.

5.2 Co-authorship

It is expected that, particularly for article-based dissertations, your primary supervisor is included as a co-author during publication. In some cases, this may also apply to supervisory committee members.

Ideally, publications resulting from the dissertation represent meaningful collaboration between the student, their supervisor's mentorship, and the committee's input. While the student is expected to be the lead author on all publications (and takes a meaningful lead author role in conceptualizing the projects, collecting the data, conducting the analysis, writing the paper, and guiding it through to publication), supervisor and/or committee members co-authorship reflects their significant mentorship and guidance in all of these phases. Authorship should be discussed ahead of time and summarized in a written agreement (and access given to all parties for their records).

It is recognized, however, that this ideal may not always be the case. Supervisors and committee members, for example, do not have the right to pressure that they or others be added as co-authors where it would not be appropriate according to authorship criteria, or for providing funding or supervision alone. Information on how to best manage your relationship with your supervisor and supervisory committee is included in Section 4.0 (above). Please note that the Graduate Program Director (GPD) should also be your first point of contact in cases where there is friction amongst you and/or your supervisor/supervisory committee. In cases where your supervisor is the GPD, please contact the DEM program's undergraduate coordinator.

6.0 Other Program Elements

There are other program elements that students are highly encouraged to engage in:

- **IMS 200 Training**
  Students in the MDEM program will be expected to complete IMS 200 Training during the course of their degree. IMS 200 training is offered by the Emergency Management Ontario, and typically scheduled for the fourth weekend of October, although this may change. IMS 200 training for the upcoming academic year is scheduled for: **October 25-26.**

- **Tabletop Emergency Exercise**
  Participation in our annual tabletop exercise will allow students to apply the knowledge they have gained in the classroom to an exercise based on a disaster scenario. The exercise will typically be a one-day event on the last Saturday of March, although this day may change. The tabletop exercise for the upcoming academic year is scheduled for: **March 28, 2026**.

- **Disaster Seminar Series**
  Students are encouraged to attend the weekly Disaster Seminar Series, offered through Y-EMERGE, York's pan-university Organized Research Unit for disasters. The Disaster Seminar Series is a hub for cutting edge research, innovative practitioner perspectives, and networking opportunities. It is intended to build community with those studying disasters, crises, emergencies, and other catastrophes from all faculties across campus. Activities will include presentations and activities with professors, practitioners, alumni, graduate students, and others. The Disaster Seminar is held in person weekly in the Advanced Disaster, Emergency and Rapid Response Simulation (ADERSIM) Lab. The lab is located in the basement of Schulich School of Business (111 Ian MacDonald Blvd, North York, ON M3J 1P3), on **Thursdays 2:45-3:45 pm EST (starts Sep. 11)**.

- **Weekly Reading Online Group**

  Also offered through Y-EMERGE, the weekly reading group is a virtual space to discuss disaster-related readings. Some benefits of an academic reading group include:
  - Critical thinking and scholarly dialogue (engage deeply with complex texts to analyze, question, and debate)
  - Professional and academic skill development (synthesizing literature, articulating arguments, responding to critique)
  - Building community and intellectual support

  The Weekly Reading Group is expected to be held online weekly on **Mondays between 3-4 pm.**

**Note: While students are highly encouraged to engage in these additional project elements, they are not strict requirements as part of the MDEM degree.*

7.0 DEMS Courses

The following is a list of courses offered by the DEM program
Core courses:

- DEMS 7700 3.0: Risk, Vulnerability, and Resilience
- DEMS 7701 3.0: Research and Practice in Disaster & Emergency Management
- DEMS 5051/7730 3.0 Research Design and Qualitative Research Methods
- DEMS 5052/7740 3.0 Quantitative Research Methods
- DEMS 7750 3.0: Research Design and Dissertation Development
- DEMS 7790 3.0*:* Teaching, Learning, and Pedagogy

Optional/Elective courses

- GS/DEMS 5000 3.0 Directed reading
- GS/DEMS 5010 3.0 Advanced DEM: GIS, Modelling, Simulation
- GS/DEMS 5020 3.0 Disasters: Concepts and Causes
- GS/DEMS 5030 3.0 Social and Behavioural Dimensions of Disasters
- GS/DEMS 5040 3.0 Natural Hazards
- GS/DEMS 5053 3.0 Topics in Business Continuity
- GS/DEMS 5060 3.0 Terrorism Studies I
- GS/DEMS 5080 6.0 Emergency Management Practicum
- GS/DEMS 5082 3.0 Disaster & Emergency Management in Healthcare
- GS/DEMS 5083 3.0 Disaster & Emergency Management (EM) Legislation *(not currently offered)*
- GS/DEMS 5710 3.0 Critical Infrastructure Protection *(next offered in Fall 2026)*
- GS/DEMS 6070 3.0 Disaster Ethics *(not offered in Fall 2026)*
- GS/DEMS 6999 6.0 Major Research Paper

For more potential elective courses from other Faculties and graduate programs, please, visit their websites. For example:

- The Faculty of Environmental & Urban Change (EUC) www.yorku.ca/gradstudies/environmental-studies/current-students/courses/
- Earth and Space Science and Engineering lassonde.yorku.ca/esse/academics/graduate/graduate-courses/

In some cases, students are eligible to take graduate courses in other universities in Ontario and/or Canada to fulfil non-DEM credit requirements.

You will need permission to take graduate level courses from outside of the MDEM program and from another university in Ontario/Canada. The forms for this purpose can be found here:

- **For courses outside MDEM at York:**
  www.yorku.ca/gradstudies/students/current-students/registration-enrolment/fgs-forms/
- **For courses in another Ontario University:**
  www.yorku.ca/gradstudies/wp-content/uploads/sites/184/2021/03/ovgs-application.pdf
- **For courses outside of Ontario:**
  Canadian University Graduate Transfer Agreement (CUGTA) Request Form - https://www.yorku.ca/gradstudies/wp-content/uploads/sites/184/2023/03/cugta-request-form.pdf

7.1 Course Descriptions

- **DEMS 7700 3.0: Risk, Vulnerability, and Resilience**
  Students will develop an understanding of theories, approaches, methods, and issues in comprehensive emergency management through a deep reading of seminal literature and debates in the field. Case studies from within and beyond Canada will be discussed, considering aspects of risk, vulnerability and resilience. Contrasting disciplinary perspectives on the critical studies of disaster will be analyzed and compared. This is a required course for students in the DEM doctoral program.
  In Critical Theory and Practice in DEM 1, we focus on Risk, Vulnerability, and Resilience. Disasters and emergencies have long been understood through three meta-narratives: risk, vulnerability, and resilience. In this course, we explore in depth each approach to understanding, preparing for, and responding to disasters. Material covered includes risk, vulnerability, resilience, and disaster theory; risk governance and the construction of risk in society; and introduction to types of hazards. Students will apply these concepts to real-world scenarios and contemporary events.

  This course is a pre-requisite of GS/DEMS 7701 3.00 Critical Theory and Practice in DEM 2: Research and Practice in Disaster and Emergency Management

- **DEMS 7701 3.0: Research and Practice in Disaster & Emergency Management**
  Disasters and emergencies attract a wide variety of attention from practitioners, academics, governments, and the public. In this course, we explore the different disciplinary approaches to academic research on disasters (including sociology, anthropology, philosophy, science and technology studies, systems theory, decision-making, and public administration) and the practitioner experiences in the field (including government, nongovernmental, and private sector roles). The part of the course is based on deep-dive visits by experts from each field, with an emphasis on critical reflection between the issues raised by each perspective.

  Pre-requisite: GS/DEMS 7700 3.00

- **GS/DEMS 7730/5051 3.00 Research Design and Qualitative Research Methods**
  This course provides students with an introduction to philosophical bases of research design as well as a practical introduction to qualitative methods. Students will gain an understanding of the paradigmatic foundations of research, how to design and evaluate qualitative research and experiment with a range of qualitative methods (i.e., interview, focus groups, observation, archival analysis).

- **GS/DEMS 7740/5052 3.00 Research Design and Quantitative Methods**
  Students are provided with a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of various quantitative research methods and their applications in disaster and emergency management. Using statistical methods, students will learn to analyze data and formulate hypotheses and conceptual relationships.

- **DEMS 7750 3.0: Research Design and Dissertation Development**
  This seminar introduces key skills in research project design, including scoping a research question, situating it in the literature, determining appropriate methodological tools, and conducting effective literature reviews. Students will also develop skills in academic project management while working towards the development of a dissertation proposal. Pre-requisites: DEMS 7700, DEMS 7730, DEMS 7740.

- **DEMS 7790 3.0: Teaching, Learning, and Pedagogy**
  Delves into pedagogical theories and teaching and learning frameworks pertinent to emergency management education in both university and professional settings (public and private). The course provides a comprehensive understanding of the various teaching and learning strategies that can be employed to effectively convey emergency management concepts. Students will have the opportunity to critically analyze these strategies, develop their teaching styles, and enhance their instructional competencies. Through a blend of theoretical insights and practical applications, students will be prepared to contribute effectively to the education and training of stakeholders in academic, public and private settings, including future emergency management professionals.

- **GS/DEMS 5010 3.00 Advanced DEM: GIS, Modelling, Simulation**
  This course explores the applications of advanced theory, methods and technologies in disaster and emergency management. Disaster and emergency management decision and planning methods and models, decision support systems, information systems and disaster databases, geographic information systems, remote sensing, various disasters and emergency management software and their applications are discussed.

- **GS/DEMS 5020 3.00 Disasters: Concepts and Causes**
  This course focuses on the risk to society from hazards and disasters, and how society adapts to those risks. Course content will focus on disaster theory and the processes within society and the environment that creates vulnerability. An interdisciplinary and mainly social science approach with a global perspective will be taken, but with some emphasis on Canadian content. General topics will include (1) disaster data and theory, (2) patterns of risk, (3) processes that create vulnerability & resilience, (4) human response and coping mechanisms, (5) impacts of disasters, and (6) case studies of disasters.

- **GS/DEMS 5030 3.00 Social and Behavioural Dimensions of Disasters**
  This course examines social and behavioural dimensions of human interactions before, during and after emergencies and disasters, including behavioural myths and realities; linkages between individuals, families, groups, organizations, community social systems, and various levels of government; social vulnerability and the disproportionate impact of disasters upon various societal groups.

- **GS/DEMS 5040 3.00 Natural Hazards**
  This course focuses on natural processes including geological, hydrological, meteorological, and biophysical and how they impact people, property, and the environment around the world. Students will learn the causes and physical dynamics of various natural hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, floods, extreme weather, climate change, and pandemics to name a few. Course credit exclusion: LE/ESSE 1410 6.00: Natural, Technological and Human-induced Disasters.

- **GS/DEMS 5053 3.00 Topics in Business Continuity**
  This course discusses the knowledge, methods, and procedures to understand the impacts of disasters on businesses and how to develop risk management and business continuity programs and plans. The course is based on the past and recent scholarly research, business crisis cases, existing standards such as ISO 31000 and ISO 22399, CSA Z1600 and BSI 25999.

- **GS/DEMS 5060 3.00 Terrorism Studies I**
  The purpose of this course is to give the student a background to, and, overview of terrorism in the 21st Century. It will serve to give students, in the program, an understanding of this element of the threat spectrum. It will further sensitize them to the potential dangers and probabilities that grow out of this area of critical concern.

- **GS/DEMS 5082 3.00 Disaster and Emergency Management in Healthcare**
  This course addresses how the principles and theories of Emergency & Disaster Management are applied in healthcare settings such as paramedicine, hospitals, and public health in both Canadian and international contexts.

- **GS/DEMS 5083 3.00 Disaster & Emergency Management (EM) Legislation**
  This course will provide an understanding of disaster and emergency management-related legislation, orders in council and regulations within Canada, as well as how it relates internationally to NGOs and international disaster response. It will prepare students to integrate themselves into various emergency management roles within municipalities, provinces, federal government, NGOs and private sector organizations.

- **GS/DEMS 5710 3.00 Critical Infrastructure Protection**
  In this course, students will research threats, vulnerabilities and risks to critical infrastructure from the perspective of managing risks to ensure for reliability through appropriate protection and resiliency measures, regulations/laws strategies and practices as well as the importance, ways and means, of conducting periodic risk and resiliency assessments.

7.2 Course Schedule

The following table is subject to change. Students should consult the course timetable found here:

Course Code		Term	Course Title	Course Instructor	Inst	Day	Hour
			FALL TERM				
DEMS	7700	F	Critical Theory and Practice in DEM 1	Jennifer Spinney	LECT	R	16:00
DEMS	5052/7740	F	Research Design and Quantitative Methods	TBD	LECT	R	11:30
DEMS	5020	F	Disasters: Concepts and Causes	Jack Rozdilsky	LECT	R	16:00
DEMS	5060	F	Terrorism Studies I	Jack Rozdilsky	LECT	W	19:00
DEMS	6070	F	Disasters and Ethics	David Etkin	LECT	M	11:30
			WINTER TERM				
DEMS	7701	W	Critical Theory and Practice in DEM 2	Nirupama Agrawal	LECT	R	16:00
DEMS	5051/7730	W	Research Design and Qualitative Research Methods	Kelly Thomson	LECT	R	11:30
DEMS	5030	W	Social and Behavioral Dimensions of Disasters	Jennifer Spinney	BLEN	W	14:30
DEMS	5053	W	Topics in Business Continuity	Jack Rozdilsky	LECT	T	11:30
DEMS	5080	W	Disaster & Emergency Management Practicum	Nirupama Agrawal	PRAC		0:00
DEMS	5082	W	Disaster and Emergency Management in Healthcare	Ian Attard and Andrew Moull	ONLN	T	16:00
			SUMMER TERM				
DEMS	5010		Advanced DEM: GIS, Modelling, Simulation	Ali Asgary	BLEN	TBD	
DEMS	5040		Natural Hazards	Nirupama Agrawal		TBD	

8.0 Important Program Policies

8.1 Class Attendance

- Full attendance is expected in all courses. Only in specific, unavoidable situations are absences excused from class:
    - personal emergencies, including, but not limited to, illness of the student or of a dependent of the student, or death in the family;
    - religious observances that prevent the student from attending class;
    - participation in University-sponsored activities, approved by the appropriate University authority, such as intercollegiate athletic competitions, activities approved by academic units, academic field trips, and special events connected with coursework;
    - government-required activities, such as military assignments, jury duty, or court appearances; and
    - any other absence that the professor approves.
- Students are responsible for all material covered in classes they miss, even when their absences are excused.
- If possible, students should notify their course professor or instructor, in advance, if they are going to be absent for any reason and discuss the possibility of alternate arrangements for the completion and grading of any missed assignments, tests, or other evaluative tools as stipulated in the course outline.
- Students must make arrangements with instructors to complete missed assignments, labs, examinations or other course requirements.
- A student who is absent from three (3) or more classes without providing written justification to the course instructor and doing independent work to make up for the missed classes may receive a failing grade in that course.
- Students missing more than three (3) classes, regardless of whether their absences are avoidable or unavoidable, will be considered unable to meet the "learning outcomes" of the course, unless in the judgement of the course director the student has done sufficient makeup work to compensate for these absences.

- A student may make up missed work only at the discretion of the course professor or instructor. Missed assignments, tests, or other evaluative tools could result in the forfeiture of grades as described in the course outline.
- It is expected that students will arrange their work schedules with their employers in such a way as to enable them to attend all classes as scheduled. If, however, a student must miss a class because of workplace demands, the student will be entitled to submit alternative work to demonstrate their mastery of the missed course material, and to have that alternative work treated as this policy requires.

8.2 Expectations of Full-time Students

- Full-time doctoral students are expected to be available to enroll in courses as scheduled by the program, whether during the day or in the evening. Most courses are delivered in person at the York University Keele campus. Students who are employed are responsible for obtaining permission from their employer to attend courses as required. Students working full-time should only pursue the doctoral degree on a part-time basis. Course schedules will not be adjusted to accommodate individual student circumstances. To aid in planning, particularly for part-time doctoral students, Thursdays are designated days for DEMS core and methods courses, as well as the day in which the Y-EMERGE Disaster Seminars will be held.

8.3 Research Methods Courses for Doctoral Students

- Students completing the PhD DEM degree are expected to develop a strong foundation in research. This includes familiarity with both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Therefore, all doctoral students must complete both DEMS 7730/5051 and DEMS 7740/5052, regardless of whether their dissertation uses both approaches. Since Disaster and Emergency Management is an interdisciplinary field, proficiency in both methodological approaches is essential.

8.4 Exemptions for Research Methods Courses

- Students who have completed graduate-level research methods courses in another program may request an exemption from DEMS 5051 and/or DEMS 5052. Approval must be obtained from the Graduate Program Director, who will consult the instructor of the relevant course. Exemptions are not granted for undergraduate methods courses. To qualify, the previous course must cover all key concepts and include assignments and evaluation criteria equivalent to those of the DEMS methods courses.

8.5 DEMS Course Exclusions for Doctoral Students

- Doctoral students cannot enrol in DEMS 5080 (Disaster & Emergency Management Practicum) and/or DEMS 5000 (Directed Reading) in order to meet course credit requirements for their PhD DEM degree.

8.6 Students with Completed DEMS 5000-6000 courses as part of another degree

- Former students that have taken 5000 or 6000-level DEMS courses in the past, as part of another degree (e.g. MDEM), are not allowed to count these courses towards their doctoral degree. As such, these students should work with their supervisor to identify other courses that are appropriate in lieu of these courses, in order to meet credit requirements. For those students that have taken DEMS research methods courses already (namely DEMS 5051 and/or DEMS 5052), students are highly recommended to take alternate methods courses that will aid them in their dissertation research, and professional development more broadly.

8.7 Student Time Limits

- For doctoral students at York University's Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS), the typical timeline for completing degree requirements, including coursework and dissertation, is within 18 terms (6 years) of initial registration, according to York

University's regulations. This includes maintaining continuous registration and paying the appropriate fees until graduation. Given our DEMS PhD expected timeline of completion for our PT students exceeds this (8 years) it will be the responsibility of the student to petition for extension each academic year after 18 terms, in order to maintain PT status.

8.8 Scholarship Application Expectations for Full-time Students

- Full-time PhD DEM students are expected to apply to scholarships throughout their degree, both external and internal. Candidates are to apply to the Tri-Agency's (CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC) Canada Graduate Research Scholarship – Doctoral each year for the first three years of their degree. This includes submitting an application in the October of their first semester in the program to meet institutional deadlines.

8.9 Large Language Models and AI Use

- Any form of large language models (LLMs) or 'artificial intelligence' (AI) use should be explicitly and carefully discussed with your committee prior to use to determine suitability and appropriateness. Any use of LLMs or AI must be disclosed in writing in the dissertation, the dissertation defense, comprehensive exams, or subsequent publications of this material.