



Graduate Programme in Interdisciplinary Studies

Guidelines for Students and Supervisors

The Programme

The Interdisciplinary Master's Programme is designed for students wishing to pursue independent, innovative research which does not fit existing programme or subject categories.

It is intended to encourage projects combining such diverse fields as Fine Arts and the Natural Sciences, Social Science, Humanities, Environmental Studies, Law, Computer Science and Health.

To qualify for admission, candidates must have a B+ average and an honours degree from a recognized university. Qualified students are considered for admission to the Programme, on the basis of a proposal which will lead to a thesis, and which will involve academic enquiry in more than one discipline or area of knowledge. Candidates are encouraged to consult with the Programme Director to discuss the proposal before applying. A phone consultation will suffice if the candidate is out of town. At the conclusion of the student's studies, the thesis is defended at an oral examination.

Thesis Supervision

Admission to the Programme is understood to be conditional. In the first instance, three supervisors representing the relevant areas of study must be located for the project. The Supervisors can be from any Department or Faculty in the University, but must be either on the Graduate Faculty or qualified for an appointment. Then, as a group, they must agree on a plan of study to be carried out by the student. The GPD in consultation with the and the student, selects supervisors, who will work with the student for the duration of the project.

As supervision in the Programme is considered a team effort, all supervisors have equal status and no one member is considered the thesis supervisor. One member does, however, act as Chair, or Coordinator, and is asked to report periodically to the GPD regarding the student's progress. All Supervisors are listed on the student's transcript at the completion of the program. Incoming students will receive a copy of the Faculty of Graduate Studies' Supervisory Guidelines.

The student is expected to meet regularly and to work closely with the Committee throughout the period of registration in the Programme. Committee meetings involving all supervisors fulfil a function similar to that of a seminar on the thesis topic and will be graded as an Interdisciplinary Seminar. The format and frequency of these discussions are to be worked out by the student and the Committee. The student might meet with individual members for some purposes and with the full Committee for others. The general rule of the Program is that the student should meet with each supervisor at least once a month and with the full Committee at least once each term. It is the student's responsibility to arrange such meetings. Each year the student is also expected to file with the department an Interim Progress Report by January 30, and an Annual Progress Report by April 15.

Course Requirements

In addition to the Interdisciplinary Seminar, the student is required to take FOUR half courses – typically one in each of their three disciplines -or their equivalent at the graduate level relating closely to the thesis topic. Normally, these will be selected from existing courses offered by regular programs in the Graduate Faculty. Full courses may also be taken, and up to one full credit may be obtained from a directed reading course. The latter is encouraged when a suitable graduate course is not otherwise available.

If a reading course is recommended, a plan of readings, assignments and course evaluation must be filed with the Programme Director. Courses are chosen in consultation with both the Supervisory Committee and the Program Director. In all cases, the courses shall be directly relevant to the thesis project. If make-up work is considered necessary or if special skills are needed for the project, extra course work may be required of the student.

The Prospectus

The thesis forms the core of the student's research and study in this Program. It is important, therefore, that a fairly definite thesis prospectus be prepared at an early stage in the student's progress. Within the first year of registration the student must submit a proposal for approval, first to the Supervisory Committee, then to the GPD and finally to the Dean of the Graduate Faculty. The deadline for submitting the proposal to the Programme for approval is **April 15** of the first year for full-time students and of the second year for part-time students. The student is notified in writing if there are changes required, or if there are questions that need to be answered. If approval is granted, the student may proceed with the writing of the thesis.

Students are advised to begin discussions as soon as possible with their supervisors regarding the writing of the thesis. In most cases, the prospectus represents an expansion or refinement of the initial proposal along with whatever modifications are necessary for developing the topic or for bringing it into focus. Since thesis projects often err on the side of breadth and expansiveness, Supervisors and students are encouraged to focus on a well-defined topic and to be realistic about the goals and practicalities of a Master's thesis. In any event, the prospectus should be a clear, discursive statement which describes the thesis and outlines the work involved.

The student may find it useful to examine other theses in the Program office and consult the Director about the preparation of the prospectus.

The following should be included in the prospectus:

1. Working title of the thesis and an explanation of the project as the student understands it. Although refinements and revisions may occur as the work progresses, it should be possible for the student to outline the project, to describe it accurately, and to indicate the way in which it will be carried out.
2. A tentative list of chapters or divisions into which the thesis will fall, so far as the student can determine at this early state.

3. An account of the existing state of scholarship on the subject along with an explanation of why the student feels the proposed thesis may be safely undertaken.
4. A selective bibliography indicating the sources on which the thesis will be based.
5. When applicable, a signed statement indicating that the student and supervisors are familiar with the guidelines on ethics in research involving human participants.

Other Requirements

The student is expected to file regular progress reports with the Supervisory Committee and the Program Director. The student will also be asked to participate in the Programme's Interdisciplinary Colloquia and at some point to make a presentation about the project and the work in progress.

Time limits

The time limit for full-time students is normally two years; for part time students, three years. The student is required to petition for any extension for time needed beyond the normal limits. The rules and regulations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies should be consulted concerning time limits and related matters.

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance will most likely be offered to full-time students in the form of a Graduate Fellowship for the two years of full-time study.

Program Resources

The Programme maintains a lounge and study room for students' use. This space is located in 112 Vanier College and is equipped with two personal computers.

Interdisciplinary Colloquia

The students participate in the Interdisciplinary Colloquia held during the Winter term. These sessions provide an opportunity for students to share and discuss work in progress with other students and faculty.

The Thesis

The final manuscript must be presented in the format which corresponds to the "Guidelines for the Preparation of Theses and Dissertations" issued by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The thesis must be free of mechanical faults and the documentations must be accurate and consistent. When complete and approved, the student should supply three copies of the thesis to the Program Office for distribution to the Examining Committee at least six weeks before the date of the oral.

The Oral Examination

When the Supervisory Committee as a whole is satisfied with the thesis, the Chair notifies the Programme Director in writing that it is ready for examination. An examination is then scheduled and is attended by the following four specific members:

1. One member of the Supervisory Committee who functions as the thesis supervisor for The Oral Examination
2. A representative of the Interdisciplinary Studies Programme, normally the GPD or a member of the Executive Committee, who chairs the examination,
3. A York Internal Examiner (arm's length from the thesis)
4. An External Examiner, invited from outside York University, who is considered an expert in the student's field of study.

The other two supervisors may attend the examination and participate at the discretion of the Chair, but only the above four may vote on the final outcome.

There are four possible results of an oral examination in the Faculty of Graduate Studies:

- 1) Accepted with no revisions;
- 2) Accepted pending specified revisions (changes could range from typographical errors or changes of a minor editorial nature, to specified insertions or deletions which do not radically modify the development or argument of the thesis);
- 3) Referred pending major revisions (substantial changes are required and the thesis must

be reconsidered by the examiners in light of such changes),

4) Failed.

Formal arrangements for the oral examination are made by the Supervisors, Program Director and the Programme Administrator. The GPD is responsible for approving the External Examiner, and the GPA is responsible for distributing copies of the thesis to examiners, and for determining the time and place of the examination.

For further information, please contact:

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