



Master of Science in eHealth
Student Handbook
2020-2021



We welcome new students into our program and are pleased you have chosen this program to further your education. This handbook is designed to provide students with helpful information regarding the graduate program in eHealth. This document provides supplementary information that is applicable to all graduate students. If at any time the information in this handbook conflicts with the Graduate Calendar, the Graduate Calendar is the standard of operation.

We always welcome input from eHealth students on how to make the information in this handbook more useful and relevant for your time at McMaster. Please send any suggestions to ehealth@mcmaster.ca for consideration in future editions.

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Description of the Program

eHealth is defined as “the knowledge, skills and tools which enable information to be collected, managed, used and shared to support the delivery of healthcare and to promote health.”

The eHealth MSc program¹ received approval from the Ontario government to accept students in the fall of 2008. The program grew out of research, development, and policy interests from industry and faculty members in the Faculties of Business, Engineering, and Health Sciences. Although many departments were represented in the founding of the program, the Information Systems area in the School of Business, the department of Health Research Methods, Evidence, and Impact (formerly Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics) in the Faculty of Health Sciences, and the department of Computing and Software in the Faculty of Engineering have provided the primary pillars for the program. Other departments and units within McMaster and the surrounding area are becoming more involved and the program is benefitting from this expansion of interests and individuals.

We accepted 15 students into our first cohort of students and within 4 years we were at our projected ceiling intake of at least 20 full-time and 10 part-time students per year; we currently enroll approximately 45 full-time equivalent students and 10 part-time students per year. We have gradually increased enrolment due to the steady increase in the number of applicants.

Our program is one of several health informatics/eHealth programs in the province. However, the McMaster program is unique because of the equal emphasis from the Faculties of Business, Engineering, and Health Sciences and the 8-month internship. We also have a thesis stream and a part-time option, which are features that many other Canadian programs do not have.

The overarching goal of the program is to produce graduates who can be bridge builders among clinicians, care providers, health care administrators, technical experts, and business professionals. The multidisciplinary nature of the program allows us to achieve this by focusing on developing student

¹ <http://mscehealth.mcmaster.ca/>

competencies in Project and Change Management, Clinical and Health Services, Health Information Technologies, Research, Team Work, and Communication, to name a few.

The MSc eHealth program subscribes to McMaster's mission and vision². During the program, students are encouraged to interact, learn, innovate, be involved with their peers, and communicate their knowledge and findings. As eHealth is a very dynamic field, students must keep up with the latest literature and be aware of the implications of new technologies for healthcare professionals, patients and families, and the health care system. Integrity is one of McMaster's hallmarks, and students must be able to stand on the shoulders of those who came before and build forward. The quality of our students' learning and skill development is shown through their critical thinking, innovation, written works, and prototype demonstrations. Teamwork is emphasized throughout our program, with teams organized to study and solve problems in all our required courses and most if not all of the elective courses our students take. Our students' desire for learning is clearly demonstrated throughout the program, as they choose courses that will build foundations for future careers. This passion for learning does not leave them when they complete the program, as they transfer the knowledge and skills they have acquired to the community for the long term benefit of society, or they continue on to more advanced degrees in other programs.

Program Faculty and Staff

The following program structure ensures the program runs smoothly. Please see the [program website](#) for the names and location of faculty and staff who fulfill the following roles.
<http://mscehealth.mcmaster.ca/contact/>

Program Administrator—responsible for the day-to-day operation of the program including admissions and ongoing maintenance of the program and finances. The program administrator email is ehealth@mcmaster.ca.

Career Development and Relationship Manager (CDRM)—responsible for the Internship component of the program including employer recruitment and student preparation for internship by facilitating a career course and offering individual career coaching sessions. The CDRM email is ehintern@mcmaster.ca.

Program Director. The director is the leader of the program and oversees the direction and operation of the program. See the [program website](#) for the Director's contact information.

Faculty Leads for Business, Engineering, and Health Sciences. Each faculty appoints a faculty lead. These three individuals work with the program director, administrator, and career development and relationship manager to make the day-to-day decisions necessary for the smooth operation of the program. At the beginning of each year students are assigned to a faculty lead who is available as their academic advisor and guides them through the scholarly paper process.

Other faculty members associated with the program: [This list](#), accessible on the eHealth program website, provides information on potential thesis supervisors and scholarly paper readers.

² http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/html/opr/fast_facts/main/mission.html

School of Graduate Studies Regulations and Procedures

The eHealth program is responsible to the School of Graduate Studies (as are all graduate programs). This eHealth student handbook is not intended to replicate or modify the information found in the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) Calendar. Our goal is to provide students with a program-specific outline of the most important information that can ease one's journey to graduation. If any discrepancy occurs between this document and the SGS Calendar or related documents, the SGS Calendar shall prevail.

Students and faculty are encouraged to examine the SGS Calendar for information about:

- Graduate study at McMaster
- General regulations of the School of Graduate Studies
- University regulations for all students and faculty including the Student Code of Conduct
- Health and safety issues and regulations
- Graduate fees and financial assistance
- University services
- Fellowships, scholarships, bursaries, and other awards
- University governing bodies
- Student appeals
- Other degree programs (including degree requirements).

The School of Graduate Studies webpages (<http://gs.mcmaster.ca/>) provide additional information and forms that are important for eHealth graduate students.

Confirmation of Enrollment Letters

Occasionally a student requires a letter confirming enrollment in the program. Students may obtain this type of letter by logging into MOSAIC (Student Services Center/ Finances) and selecting the "Course Enrollment" letter option from the drop-down menu.

Governance of the Program

The program has the following committees. Their major obligations are also included.

a. Executive Committee

Functions: Considers and makes recommendations regarding the operations of the program; recommends, to the appropriate Faculty committees, policy on admission numbers and major program changes; and considers proposals from the Director requiring policy decisions. This committee also has responsibility for reviewing and applying relevant graduate policies, curriculum changes, and matters referred by the Recruiting, Admissions, Curriculum, and Internship Committee.

b. Recruiting, Admissions, Curriculum and Internship Committee

Functions: Reviews applicants to the eHealth program for admissibility; refers, before taking action, to the Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committees all matters requiring approval of the Faculties' GCPC/GPCC. This committee also suggests supervisors or advisors for new students; considers petitions from graduate students with respect to off-campus or part-time study, extension of time to complete degree requirements, and other such matters; approves or suggests curriculum review; plans and administers recruitment and internship programs; and insures that program objectives are met by these activities.

Faculty Advisors and Supervisors

Each student is assigned a faculty advisor on admission to the program.

The role of the faculty advisor is to work with the student to ensure that the student is established in the program and that the student's background strengths and needs, goals, aspirations, and progress through the program are taken into account. The advisor normally interacts with the student via email and face to face meetings to discuss progress and choices and the advisor provides advice and guidance.

The nature of academic supervision for each student depends on the program option selected. Thesis students will have a thesis supervisor and course-based students will have scholarly paper readers. Thesis supervisors and readers are not assigned by default. Each student is expected to seek out an academic supervisor based upon their study/thesis/scholarly paper interests and with guidance from their faculty advisor. If an academic supervisor is not found by the student then the faculty advisor may choose to take on this additional role with the student. For thesis students, the search for a thesis supervisor should take place during the first term in the program, if not before. For course-based students, scholarly paper readers should be sought once a scholarly paper topic is being developed

Should a change of advisor/supervisor/reader be requested, the new student-advisor/supervisor/reader pairing must be agreed to by both parties. In such circumstance, the program must be consulted and new pairing documented. See the SGS Calendar for more information on changing supervisors.

Working in Paid Positions While Enrolled as a Graduate Student

See the [SGS Calendar](#) for detailed information on working in paid positions while enrolled as a full-time student – special attention should be directed to the policies on full-time student residency requirements. The following information is specific for eHealth students.

- a. Full time students on internships are expected to work full time for 8 months (legal obligation).
- b. Students cannot end their time at McMaster with an internship semester, they must be registered for a full semester after they come back from internship in January of their second year.

Student Study Rooms

Student study rooms may be available during the academic year although this privilege is not guaranteed. Thesis students may also be allocated office space by their supervisors if available. The Program Administrator can provide information on student study rooms. The campus libraries also have study space that may be booked for group meetings and study.

Study Options

Course-Based Study

The course-based option for students (most full time and all part time students) is designed to produce graduates with a broad understanding and a set of skills and competencies across many aspects of eHealth/Health Informatics sector. This option requires students to take 8 or more courses and complete a scholarly (major) paper demonstrating their knowledge and ability to integrate across business, engineering, and health sciences.

Thesis-Based Study

The thesis option is designed for students considering a Ph.D. Thesis students are expected to focus their eHealth knowledge based upon their thesis topic. The thesis option takes 1-2 or more semesters than the course-based program, due to the time requirements of completing and defending a thesis. The eHealth program does not have its own Ph.D. program, thus students are encouraged to apply to other McMaster departments or to other universities to further their studies. Examples of potential Ph.D. programs at McMaster can be found in the departments of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Computing and Software Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, Information Systems, Nursing, Health Management, and Health Research Methodology. Canadian schools offering Ph.Ds. in eHealth/informatics are Dalhousie University and University of Victoria.

Program Options and Requirements

Full Time Status

As specified in Section 1.3 of the SGS Calendar, full time graduate students are expected to be on campus for all three terms of the university year, except during internship employment or vacation. Students are required to attend all mandatory program components, including the internship career course and program seminars.

Vacation

Normal vacation entitlement is two weeks during the year, to be scheduled by mutual agreement with the research supervisor (thesis) or first reader (if currently completing your scholarly paper). Any exception to this allotment requires approval from the supervisory committee (thesis) or program Director (course-based).

For internship, if the internship employer policy for vacation is unclear then it must be discussed with the internship employer before accepting an offer. The eHealth CDRM must be consulted and approve request prior to any vacation time being requested from an internship employer.

Full Time - Thesis

- i. **Core courses:** 4 (eHealth 724, 736, CAS 757) plus the eHealth statistics course (eHealth 705) or competency based opt out for statistics (often the equivalent of a master's level, but not a bachelor's level course). If the student is not obliged to take the statistics course, he or she must substitute another elective in its place.
- ii. **Electives:** 1 minimum but could be more at the discretion of the student's advisor or supervisor. Extra courses are often required for students with limited backgrounds in eHealth, or other areas related to their thesis such as a research methods course.
- iii. Successful completion of SGS 101 (Ethics) and SGS 201 (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities) in the first year of the program.
- iv. **Internship:** Successful completion of the full 8-month internship (eHealth 798 and 799). Thesis students are encouraged to accept on campus, research-based internships when available. A complete internship record includes submission of: offer letter, learning goals & objectives, performance evaluation by employer, internship report and poster presentation.
- v. **Thesis:** In consultation with thesis supervisor, thesis topic is to be selected and approved within two terms of registration. Students are required to have their proposal accepted by their thesis committee at the end of their second term (usually April). The thesis background and literature review are typically done in parallel with internship with full-time focus post-internship.
- vi. **Maximum course load:** To allow appropriate focus on all topics/pillars in eHealth, a student is limited to a maximum of 3 courses, together with the internship career course and/or seminars, per academic term. The student may apply to the eHealth program for permission to take a course during their internship. Permission is granted based upon prior academic performance and in consultation with internship employer.
- vii. **Maximum length of the program** is 3 years, at which point the student is deemed to be out of time.

Full Time - Course Based

- I. **Core courses:** 4 (eHealth 724, 736, CAS 757) plus the eHealth statistics course (eHealth 705) or competency based opt out for statistics (often the equivalent of a master's level, but not a bachelor's level course). If the student is not obliged to take the statistics course they must substitute another elective in its place.
- II. **Electives:** 4 minimum but could be more at the discretion of the advisor or supervisor. Extra courses are often required for students with limited backgrounds in eHealth or their area of interest.
- III. Successful completion of SGS 101 (Ethics) and SGS 201 (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities) in the first year of the program
- IV. **Internship:** Successful completion of the full 8-month internship (eHealth 798 and 799). A complete internship record includes submission of: offer letter, learning goals & objectives, performance evaluation by employer, internship report and poster presentation.
- V. **Scholarly paper:** approximate time allocated to the scholarly paper should be similar to the amount of work needed to complete one graduate course (~ 130 hours)
- VI. **Maximum course load:** To allow appropriate focus on all topics/pillars in eHealth, a student is limited to a maximum of 3 courses, and the career course, per academic term. The student may apply to the

eHealth program for permission to take a course during their internship. Permission is granted based upon prior academic performance and in consultation with internship employer.

VII. **Maximum length of the program** is 3 years, at which point the student is deemed to be out of time

Part Time - Course based

- I. **Core courses:** 4 (eHealth 724, 736, CAS 757) plus the eHealth statistics course (eHealth 705) or competency based opt out for statistics (often the equivalent of a master's level, but not a bachelor's level course). If the student is not obliged to take the statistics course he or she must substitute another elective in its place.
- II. **Electives:** 4 minimum but could be more at the discretion of the advisor or supervisor
- III. Successful completion of SGS 101 (Ethics) and SGS 201 (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities) in the first year of the program.
- IV. **Maximum course load:** Part-time students are allowed to take a maximum of 3 courses per academic year.
- V. **Scholarly paper:** approximate time allocated to the scholarly paper should be similar to the amount of work needed to complete one graduate course (~ 130 hours).
- VI. **Maximum length of the program** is 5 years, at which point the student is deemed to be out of time

Course and sessional timetables: See the SGS calendar. The McMaster timetable with statutory holidays and important dates is available online. Adherence to dates is vital for students, especially as they near graduation.

Course Descriptions

- a. Avenue-to-Learn is the required course content manager: <http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/>
- b. MOSAIC is the Student's Online Academic Registration system and it must be used to select courses.
- c. Required courses (must be completed prior to internship)³:
 - i. eHealth 724 - Fundamentals of eHealth and the Canadian Health Care System (fall)
 - ii. eHealth 736 - Management Issues in eHealth (fall)
 - iii. CAS 757 - Modern Software Technology for eHealth (fall)
 - iv. eHealth 705 - Statistics for eHealth (winter)
- d. List of potential electives is posted on the eHealth program website⁴ with details of how to get approval for a McMaster course not on this list. Students need to justify to the program director why they should be allowed to take a course from another department as an elective.
- e. SGS 101 and 201—more information is available online. These courses are not for credit but are mandatory for graduation. Students must complete both courses within their first month of study.
- f. Students may petition to transfer one course from another program into the eHealth program providing the course is at the graduate level, is relevant to the program, is not deemed substantially equivalent to a completed course, and it has not been counted towards another degree.
- g. Statement and procedures for how to get a graduate course approved from another Ontario university (see below). Students may be allowed to transfer in one graduate level, elective course from another university and count it towards their degree. Please note however a course cannot be counted towards 2 degrees. Forms and procedures are listed on the SGS website. This procedure takes time and planning so this process should be started immediately after admission is granted.

³ <https://ehealth.mcmaster.ca/program-options/program-requirements/compulsary-courses/>

⁴ <https://ehealth.mcmaster.ca/program-options/program-requirements/electives/>

Course Choices, Adding and Dropping Courses

Course selection and registration starts in late summer for the entire academic year. Students should plan their choice of courses carefully and in a timely manner as many courses reach their limit of enrollment quickly. Each student should plan across all semesters to the best of their ability and in conjunction with their advisor. Course add and drop deadlines are outlined in the SGS Calendar Sessional Dates. If students do not drop courses on time, a mark of Fail will appear on the transcript. More information is available from the SGS calendar on registering for courses and adding and dropping courses. Admission to the required core courses is guaranteed for eHealth students.

Non-core courses may be cancelled if insufficient numbers of students are registered. Notification of these cancellations will normally be sent out as soon as a decision is made, most likely in the month before a class is scheduled to start.

Under certain situations a student can take a graduate level course at another Ontario university (host) while registered at McMaster University and apply this credit to his or her education at McMaster. Forms must be signed before the class starts by officials from both universities (McMaster and host university). Tuition fees at McMaster cover the costs of the courses if taken at an Ontario university. Courses from other non-Ontario universities can be transferred in but Ontario tuition does not cover the expenses of these courses. The official designation of taking courses at another Ontario university is called Ontario Visiting Graduate Student ([OVGS](#)).

Course Grades

Student performance at the course level is quite straightforward. Each course has its own criteria that are usually based on assignments, papers and class participation. The letter grade is awarded by the course coordinator. The grading system is as follows unless otherwise outlined in the course syllabus:

A+	90 to 100 consistently outstanding
A	85 to 89 overall superior quality
A-	80 to 84 high achievement
B+	77 to 79 competent, but not consistently high quality
B	73 to 76 satisfactory quality
B-	70 to 72 only marginally acceptable
F	failure inadequate work

Students who fail a course based on inadequate work or an integrity issue may be requested to leave the program. In most cases however, the student will either repeat the course or take another elective to replace the failed course. A second failure of the retaken course or any other course will require the student to withdraw from the program.

Full time students cannot start their internships until the core courses (eHealth 705, 724, 736, CAS 757) and internship preparation (career course and at least one individual consultation with the CDRM) have been completed satisfactorily.

Career Course and Winter Seminars

The Career Course (Term 1) and a series of Winter Seminars (Term 2) supplement course content, enhance and develop skills, introduce employers, showcase research, demonstrate new products and services, and provide the potential to build strong networks. The career course includes resume and cover letter development, interviewing and networking strategies, mock interviews, and insights into the various roles students can expect to take on as interns. This preparation is essential to students' success during the internship recruitment cycles which begin at the end of Term 1. Students are typically employed as interns from May- December every year.

Attendance

Attendance is required for all courses, including the internship career course and winter seminar activities.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) "supports students who have been diagnosed with a disability or disorder, such as a learning disability, ADHD, mental health diagnosis, chronic medical condition, sensory, neurological or mobility limitation. SAS assists with academic and disability-related needs, including learning Strategies, assistive technologies, test and exam administration, note taking, accommodations for courses, and SAS lounge and events." Please see their website for more information.

<http://sas.mcmaster.ca/>

Leaves of Absence

Students are allowed to take leaves of absence for various reasons after 1 year in the program, unless for medical reasons. While on leave the student has no obligations with respect to classes and tuition for specified periods of time based on personal situations and needs but also may not use university resources or engage with faculty members during that period. Situations meriting a leave can be health issues, parental leaves, and certain other issues. **Leaves of absence are ideally applied for before the start of the leave and they must be approved by SGS Associate Deans.** Forms and more information are available on the SGS website⁵

Non Statutory Holidays

Thesis students who have completed courses are entitled to holidays. See the SGS Calendar Section 2.5.8.

eHealth Student Information

Students must provide the Program Administrator with changes in address or other status. It is the student's responsibility to keep their information current on MOSAIC.

Student Responsibilities

McMaster University has set policies related to student responsibilities. These university policies are found in the following links.

- [Student Code of Conduct »](#)
- [University Policies, Procedures & Guidelines »](#)

⁵ http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=25&navoid=4667#2-5-7_leaves_of_absence

- [Equity and Inclusion Office »](#)

Email

All eHealth Program Faculty, Staff, and Students will use McMaster email for official program and course-related correspondence. This is university policy and is intended to protect the confidentiality and sensitivity of information and confirm the identity of the student.

Email Signature

It has become common for students to append an affiliation signature to the end of their email correspondence. It is important that students accurately represent their affiliation with McMaster's eHealth Graduate program and its three pillar Faculties: Business, Health Science, and Engineering. A recommended affiliation signature will be provided to you.

Libraries on campus ⁶

eHealth students will need material from several libraries. Most library services can be obtained online via Libaccess⁷:

1. [Mills Memorial Library](#) (Humanities and Social Sciences) separate building near the Forsythe street entrance to campus.
2. [Innis Library](#) (Business) located in Kenneth Taylor Hall, Room 108
3. [H.G.Thode Library of Science & Engineering](#). Round red brick building on the west edge of campus.
4. [Health Sciences Library](#) housed in the Health Sciences Centre

Student Wellness Center⁸

Formerly Student Health Services, the Wellness Center is the student's doorway to medical care, counselling, wellness education and other opportunities. Many resources are available for students experiencing personal issues and in need of help.

Student Success Centre and other Student Services

The Student Success Centre is an umbrella group that provides access to many valuable student services that are not addressed by the Student Wellness Center. Their goal is "Through our programs, services and community partnerships we inspire students and alumni to engage in learning opportunities to achieve academically, personally and professionally."

Academic Integrity Office⁹

McMaster University takes such academic integrity issues as plagiarism, copyright violations, dishonesty, and others very seriously.

Religious Holidays

Students who require an academic accommodation as a result of a religious holiday should contact the appropriate Course Coordinator, Program Director or Associate Dean as soon as possible to arrange

⁶ <http://library.mcmaster.ca/about/>

⁷ <https://libraryssl.lib.mcmaster.ca/libaccess/login.php?init>

⁸ <http://wellness.mcmaster.ca/>

⁹ <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/>

accommodations for classes, assignments, tests and examinations that might be affected by a religious holiday. Please be advised that documentation may be required.

Ombuds Office at McMaster

The Ombuds office is in place to go for assistance to arbitrate university conflicts. Their goal is to be “A confidential service designed to assist students, faculty and staff in the just, fair and equitable resolution of university related complaints and concerns”. <http://www.mcmaster.ca/ombuds/>

Ethics Approvals

Ethics approvals may be needed for projects related to courses, scholarly papers, and theses. Research ethics approvals are almost always needed for projects that collect data from people, especially data for studies and projects. Interviewing professionals to gain a better understanding of a course project may be exempt from ethics. However, any project that collects original data, especially from the lay public, must have ethics approval **BEFORE** data collection begins. Also complicating the issue of ethics approval is the presence of 2 ethics boards—one for health sciences and one for other departments. Because eHealth students are interdisciplinary, careful consideration is needed to ascertain how best to obtain ethics approvals. See <http://reo.mcmaster.ca/which-reb-to-submit-application>. Also note that ethics approval can take a considerable amount of time so students are urged to start early in getting their study approved.

Publications and Conferences

Students wishing to publish their work are strongly encouraged to do so, but prior approval of the paper, poster, and/or presentation is necessary if the student is representing McMaster University, the eHealth program, or both. These presentations are usually in person or virtual conference papers or posters, panel participation at seminars, or workshop leadership using eHealth program acquired knowledge. Approval must be sought and obtained from the student’s supervisor, advisor, or program director and this approval must come before submission. Students do not need to obtain permission for personal contributions to such publications or media as blogs, wikis, or newsletters. This distinction can overlap so please check early with your advisor or the program director if you are uncertain.

Participation at Conferences—potential for partial funding from the eHealth program exists.

1. The program has a limited number of travel scholarships each year for up to \$250 each. Any registered student may apply for these funds. The application requires a description of the event and justification as to how the student would benefit from attendance (virtual or in person). The amount of the scholarship is not to exceed the cost of attending the conference or workshop and will be reimbursed following the conference or workshop once all necessary paperwork has been submitted and approved.
2. Students will be reimbursed money towards conference costs only if they are presenting a paper, a poster, being part of a panel, or are taking part in a similar event where they are seen to be representing the eHealth Program or McMaster. Conference presentations will require advisor or supervisor approval before submission to the conference.

3. The School of Graduate Studies also has some limited travel funds¹⁰ for which the student can apply. Check departmental and faculty websites for more information on internal grants and travel funding
4. Students may be given full or partial coverage of registration fees by the conference organizers to attend if they volunteer to help the organizers at the conference. Students must apply early for such a student position. It is the student's responsibility to determine if such opportunities exist from the conference organizers.

Working Alone Policy¹¹(being on campus in an isolated situation such as working in an office outside working hours)

Most of the work students are required to do is not dangerous (e.g., not performed in wet laboratories or animal quarters). If a student has been granted office space on the university campus, the student needs to comply with the McMaster Working Alone policy.

Human Rights and Equity¹²

Students are expected to know and adhere to the McMaster policies on Human Rights and Equity.

Workplace Safety¹³

Please see the policies for Health, Safety and Risk Management as these requirements also apply to graduate students.

¹⁰ <https://gsamcmaster.org/travel-grants/>

¹¹ http://www.mcmaster.ca/CEDTsafety/RMM_Working_Alone.pdf

¹² <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/General/HR/index.html>

¹³ https://hr.mcmaster.ca/employees/health_safety_well-being/our-safety/