



McMaster University

Department of Anthropology

Graduate Handbook

2023-2024

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1. LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Department of Anthropology gives honour and thanks to the Haudenosaunee and Anishanaabe nations, the traditional inhabitants of the lands where McMaster stands. We acknowledge a debt to those who were here before us and recognize our responsibility, as guests, to respect and honour the intimate relationship Indigenous peoples have to this land.

2. INTRODUCTION

As an Anthropology graduate student, your program is regulated by the expectations from three main sources: McMaster University School of Graduate Studies, the Department of Anthropology, and your particular supervisor and supervisory committee.

The Calendar of the School of Graduate Studies at McMaster University outlines the minimum requirements for graduate degrees at McMaster University. Here we outline the requirements and expectations of the Department of Anthropology. Students are responsible for following the guidelines and regulations of the University and the Department. The Anthropology graduate program, as a whole, is administered by a Graduate Committee of three members, all from the faculty. The Graduate Committee operates with powers delegated to it from the Department and its exact role may vary over the years.

This Graduate Handbook is presented as a working guide to Anthropology graduate students and their supervisors. For general university rules and procedures please refer to the current School of Graduate Studies Calendar (see web address below). Students should be familiar with the regulations therein and note that they take precedence over all Departmental regulations.

Regulations contained in this handbook are always subject to revision. Students should consult with the departmental Graduate Chair if there are any questions concerning these regulations and/or changes in them. The most up-to-date regulations in the program and in this handbook may be found on the department website (please refer to the web address below). No hard copy of this information is available, as it is updated on a regular basis.

Anthropology Web Site: <https://www.anthropology.mcmaster.ca/>

Most up to date Anthropology graduate handbook:

<https://anthropology.mcmaster.ca/resources/graduate-resources/anth-grad-handbook.pdf/view>

The Calendar of the SGS: <https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/index.php>

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3. SUPERVISOR AND SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

A. Supervisor

Prior to their arrival at McMaster, new students are assigned an advisor/supervisor for one term. At the end of the term, this person becomes the permanent supervisor unless the student or supervisor initiates a request for a change. The assignment of supervisors is initially made on the basis of compatibility of interests between student and faculty member, taking into account the supervisory load and availability of particular faculty members. Students can change supervisors (refer to section 1C); however, they are encouraged to settle on a permanent supervisor and thesis or major research paper (MRP) topic early in the program (see specific dates below).

The supervisor will assist the student in planning their program of study and ensure that the student is progressing satisfactorily within the program. Supervisors play a very important role in helping to develop a graduate student's program of study. They consult with the student in setting up the program of study and, at the same time, ensure that standards of excellence are met. They also guide students in their completion of M.A. and Ph.D. theses, or M.A. MRP. The supervisor and supervisory committee are responsible for regularly evaluating the student's performance and making recommendations to the Department and to the School of Graduate Studies regarding the student's status. These evaluations, which must take place by November 30th in the fall term and April 30th in the Winter term, are made relative to the progress milestones laid out in this document.

The student-supervisor relationship rests on mutual respect and trust. It is highly recommended that the supervisor and student fill out this document:

<https://gs.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2020/02/Getting-Supervisory-Relationship-Off-to-Good-Start-updated-May-2022.pdf>

The student should be able to talk freely with the supervisor about all aspects of the graduate program. To a large extent, the supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the student moves through the various stages of the graduate program in a timely fashion, obtaining the best possible qualifications and meeting the program's goals. The student has a responsibility to consult with the supervisor on a regular basis about all aspects of the program of study and research.

Specifically:

1. Students consult with the supervisor about the courses to be taken in order to satisfactorily complete the program. Students should be aware that the Graduate Committee could require a student to complete more than the minimum number of courses required if it believes that the student lacks expertise in areas that are particularly important to their training as an anthropologist.
2. Students consult with the supervisor about the topics for the M.A. thesis, MRP, and Ph.D. dissertation. Students should develop their thesis/dissertation proposal in consultation with

their supervisors and members of their supervisory committee. The proposal must be approved by the supervisor (MRP) or supervisory committee (MA thesis, PhD) before the student pursues the research program. The final version of the MRP proposal must be formally completed, approved, and submitted by February 15th of the second term; the MA proposal by May 1st of the second term; and the Ph.D. proposal by the end of the sixth term (typically the end of the second year).

3. MA Thesis and PhD students should consult with their supervisor about the selection of other members of the supervisory committee. For those following the M.A. thesis route, the committee must be established by the student and advisor by January 15th of the first year. For those in the Ph.D. program, committees must be formed by January 31 of the second term; the first progress meeting with the committee must be held by the end of the first year (April 30th). In agreeing to be on a supervisory committee, faculty members commit to making themselves available for committee meetings and to provide guidance informally to students when necessary.
4. Ph.D. students consult with the supervisor and committee over the choice of areas in which comprehensive examinations will be taken (see Section 3C).
5. Students consult with the supervisor concerning any change in status that may be desired. This includes items such as requests for leaves of absence and off-campus status while undertaking field research.
6. Students consult with the supervisor regularly while conducting their MRP, M.A. thesis, or Ph.D. dissertation research. The supervisor, in consultation with the student's supervisory committee, approves all data collection instruments (e.g., questionnaires, interview guides, etc.) before these are used by students. Students whose projects require Ethics Committee approval (i.e., if they involve human or animal subjects of research) should ensure that all communications with the Committees/Boards identify the student and the supervisor and bear the signatures of both. Ethics application, where appropriate, must be submitted by March 1 of year one or possibly year two if you are in a Ph.D. program. More detailed information about the criteria for obtaining Ethics Committee approval can be found at: <https://research.mcmaster.ca/ethics/>. The Ethics Committee takes several weeks to process applications.
7. Students consult with their supervisor regularly while writing the M.A. thesis or Ph.D. dissertation. Students will not be allowed to proceed to the oral defence of the thesis or dissertation unless it has been approved by the supervisory committee.
8. Students should contact their faculty advisor/supervisor in August to work out their courses and program of study before they arrive on campus. Students should consult with the advisor/supervisor about any problem encountered in completing the program, including any administrative or bureaucratic difficulties that may arise.

IMPORTANT: The Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Program (**John Silva**) must be advised of all decisions that are made pertaining to the student's program.

B. Supervisory Committee for MA Thesis and PhD students

The supervisory committee functions in conjunction with the supervisor as an advisory and examining body for each student's work. Each graduate student is assigned a faculty advisor when admitted to the program, and by January of their first year they select a supervisor to carry them through the rest of their program (this may be the assigned advisor). Students are urged to consult with their supervisor before registration. Graduate students select or change courses

only after consultation with and approval of their supervisor.

The candidate's supervisory committee reviews their program at all stages. Students must organize bi-annual meetings of their committee (by November 30 and April 30, respectively), to discuss progress and goals. In preparation for these meetings, students submit a student progress report to the supervisory committee (online version for PhD students and PDFs for MA students will be shared by John Silva, Administrative Assistant at the appropriate time). The student report and the committee meeting inform the bi-annual formal progress reports signed by the supervisory committee and student. If progress is unsatisfactory, the committee works with the student to deal with problems, and in some circumstances may provide criteria for continued enrolment or may suggest that the student withdraw from the program. The reports will be reviewed by the Graduate Committee and/or Chair before they are forwarded to the School of Graduate Studies.

For those pursuing the M.A. thesis option, the supervisory committee consists of at least two members (supervisor and committee member), both of whom must be in the Department of Anthropology. The MA Thesis committee may include up to three members, one of whom may come from outside the Department of Anthropology. An MA Thesis student will always have a third reader (outside the two required committee members), and this reader may be the third committee member if there is one. At the Ph.D. level the supervisory committee consists of at least three members, at least two of whom must be in the Department of Anthropology. On occasion, a member of the committee may be from another university. When making this request, the student must submit the CV of the intended committee member to John Silva. The decision regarding this member joining the committee will be made by the School of Graduate Studies.

IMPORTANT: The Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Program (**John Silva**) must be advised of all decisions that are made pertaining to the student's program.

C. Procedures for Appointing and Changing Supervisors

It is possible to change supervisors or the membership of a supervisory committee, although this is not the norm. If the direction of the research changes, membership can be changed with mutual consent of the parties involved. Supervisors and/or supervisory committee members may not resign without the department's/program's approval. A change in supervisor is at the discretion of the department/program, not the student or supervisor. Any student wishing to change supervisors must seek the permission of the Chair of the department and/or graduate director.

IMPORTANT: The Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Program (**John Silva**) must be advised of all decisions that are made pertaining to the student's program.

4. THE M.A. PROGRAM

A. M.A. General Information

1. The department grants an M.A. in anthropology in the following areas of specialization: Archaeology, Anthropology of Health, Biological Anthropology, and Socio-cultural Anthropology.
2. Students admitted to the M.A. program have the option of doing coursework and then: 1) Writing a major research paper (MRP), or 2) Writing a scholarly thesis which demonstrates ability to conduct original research.

3. In consultation with their supervisor, an M.A. student must choose between these two options by January 15 of the year of initial registration as a graduate student. For the Thesis Option, students must have arranged a properly constituted supervisory committee, made up of a supervisor and at least one additional committee member, no later than mid-January of their first year. For the MRP option, students select a topic in consultation with their supervisor.
4. Most of a graduate student's training must be obtained in courses offered in anthropology. With permission of their advisor/supervisor, students may normally take up to two graduate half-courses outside of the department. The advisor/supervisor must confer with the Graduate Committee if the student wishes to take more than two half-courses.
5. MA thesis students may transfer directly into the Ph.D. program in their second year if the Graduate Committee deems their performance satisfactory. This "accelerated transfer" does not require the completion of all the Master of Arts' requirements". (See Appendix I)
6. The departmental Speakers Series and the Professional Development Workshop (PDW) are mandatory for all *first year Anthropology graduate students*. The PDW course carries a Pass/Fail grade at the end of the first year. In order to successfully obtain a MA or PhD from our program, a student has to obtain a Pass in the PWD. A Pass will be indicated on the official transcript. All second year M.A. students without a major scholarship are recommended to attend PDW sessions associated with obtaining funding if they are applying for entry to a Ph.D. program in the next academic year. Students at any stage of the graduate program can attend the PDW.

The department may require that the student take additional courses if there are major gaps in the student's background. The Graduate Committee, on recommendation from the supervisor, may require a student to complete more than the minimum number of courses required if it believes that the student lacks expertise in areas that are particularly important to their training as an anthropologist.

B. Major Research Paper (MRP) Process

MRP students must take six graduate level half courses with at least a B+ average and write an MRP. MRP students may complete 3 courses in each term or elect to complete 2 in term one and 4 in term 2. The MRP is not a thesis, therefore fieldwork is not required. Neither is it a long undergraduate paper. The MRP should demonstrate a student's ability to integrate ideas that reflect the current state of knowledge on their chosen topic. The MRP must demonstrate relational thinking and expertise at specific, general, and abstract levels. Students taking their M.A. by MRP can expect to fulfill all requirements within 12 months.

Students begin work towards their MRP in the late fall term of their first year. MRP students must submit a draft of their MRP proposal to their supervisor by January 15. The brief proposal should be approximately 1000 words, include a full bibliography, and should address: the context, theoretical framework, methods, brief overview of intended structure of the MRP, and discussion of its scholarly contribution. The supervisor will provide feedback on the draft proposal, and the student will submit a final version of the MRP proposal to the supervisor, for approval and submission to John Silva (by email) by February 15. The paper is completed during the summer term.

The MRP should be approximately 10,000 words long (40 double-spaced typed pages, not to exceed 50 pages), not including bibliography and appendices. Students can consult with their supervisor regarding any formatting questions. Students select their research topic, but the supervisor must approve the project. The topic should be of a scope that is manageable within the

deadlines outlined below. The completed draft of the MRP is initially assessed by the supervisor, who provides a first round of comments to be incorporated into a final draft by the student. The supervisor must select a second reader of the MRP in consultation with the student by June 30th. The second reader reads the final draft, and either passes or fails the MRP. Note that the second reader does not provide comments on the MRP prior to the student formally submitting the MRP to the Graduate Administrative Assistant. Final comments on the MRP will be provided to the student by the second reader after a pass/fail mark has been assigned.

C. MRP Schedule

Students and supervisors are strongly advised to draw up a detailed plan indicating when/how they will communicate. Meetings should be in person wherever possible, though it may be necessary to communicate electronically.

	Term 1 (Sept-Dec)	Term 2 (Jan-April)	Term 3 (May-Aug)
Year 1	Coursework (3 recommended + PDW) September 5, 2023: Classes begin September 22: Deadline to add courses October 1: Deadline for student to identify MRP supervisor. October 9-15: Reading week November 30: Deadline for progress meeting with supervisor (send report to John Silva) December 8: Classes end	Coursework (3 recommended + PDW) January 8, 2024: Classes begin January 15: Deadline to declare "MRP option" and submit a draft proposal to supervisor. January 19: Deadline to add courses February 4: Deadline for supervisor feedback on proposal February 15: Deadline for final version of proposal (signed by supervisor) to be sent to John Silva February 19 – 26: Reading Week March 1: Deadline for ethics application (if required) March 11: Deadline for incomplete (INC) grades submission for previous term April 10: Classes end April 30: Deadline for progress meeting with supervisor (progress report sent to Graduate Admin Assistant)	June 15, 2024: Deadline for first draft of MRP to supervisor June 30: Deadline for comments of draft returned to student. Selection of second reader of MRP. August 1: Deadline for submission (to the Anthropology Graduate Administrative Assistant John Silva, supervisor and reader by email) of completed MRP for electronic grading. Aug 31: Deadline for grades and comments by supervisor and reader. Mid November: Fall Convocation

All dates are normal deadlines and work may proceed at a faster pace.

D. Marking Guidelines

The final grade and comments should be submitted by the supervisor and reader to the Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Program (John Silva) by August 31st. The MRP is marked on a pass/fail basis for transcript purposes. In addition, the supervisor and reader will fill out the MRP comment form. The Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Program will collate remarks from the supervisor and reader, pass them on to the student, and also send each of the two markers a copy of the other's comments.

If there is a serious discrepancy between the supervisor and the second reader (i.e., one person fails the paper and the other does not) then a meeting of the markers will be convened to resolve and confirm the final grade. If no agreement is reached, a third marker, assigned at the discretion of the Chair, will evaluate it.

The Department will, with students' signed consent, keep an archive of past students' completed projects for future students' and supervisors' reference.

E. M.A. Thesis Option

Students usually take 24 months to complete the M.A. thesis option. Students selecting the thesis option must take four graduate level half courses with at least a B+ average. Students do not receive course credit for preparing the thesis.

1. All theses must represent new contributions to knowledge and meet the highest academic standards.
2. M.A. thesis candidates must have one thesis supervisor and one committee member to guide them through all stages of thesis preparation. The supervisor and committee member also participate in the thesis defence, together with a third reader (who can also serve as a third committee member) who must be present at the defence.
3. Students prepare a thesis proposal in consultation with their supervisory committee. The proposal must contain the following elements: (1) A statement of the problem; (2) Theoretical orientation; (3) Methodology; (4) Plan and schedule of research; (5) Contribution to existing literature; (6) Bibliography. The thesis proposal, which should be approximately 10 double-spaced pages long (plus cover page, citations, recording forms, etc.), must be approved by the supervisor and the supervisory committee. It is submitted to John Silva by May 1st of the first year.
4. Students are responsible for following School of Graduate Studies guidelines for the format of the thesis and required number of copies.
5. The oral defence of the thesis can be scheduled only when the supervisory committee and the third reader approves the thesis as defensible. At this time, the candidate submits the thesis to the Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Program (John Silva).
6. The thesis must be defended at a public oral examination. Once the supervisor communicates to the Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Program (John Silva) that the thesis is ready to defend, the student is given a minimum of 10 days before the oral thesis defence takes place. The examining committee judges the quality of the thesis and the performance in the oral defense. Both must be rated satisfactory for the

student to be recommended for graduation.

7. The oral defence is chaired by the thesis supervisor. The examining committee consists of the supervisor and committee member as well as a third reader (who may also be a committee member) and any other examiners appointed by the Chair of the Department. The oral defence usually begins with the student providing a short (~15 minute long) resume of the thesis, highlighting its purpose, methodology, theory, and conclusions. The examining committee then proceeds with their questions. In fairness to the candidate, the supervisor curtails unnecessary or extraneous discussion, and may allow or disallow questions from the audience.
8. At the end of the defence, the examining committee will formally assess the oral defence and the thesis as “Pass” or “Fail.” If the student fails the oral defence, they may request a second oral defence. If the student fails a second defence, the case will be evaluated by the Graduate Committee. Previous approval of the written thesis for defence does not guarantee that the student will pass the oral defence.

F. M.A. Thesis Schedule

Students completing the thesis option are required to complete four courses and prepare and defend a thesis. Students are welcome to complete 2 courses in each term or 1 in term one and 3 in term 2. Students must also attend the Professional Development Workshop in their first year.

	Term 1 (Sept-Dec)	Term 2 (Jan-April)	Term 3 (May-Aug)
Year 1	Coursework (2 recommended + PDW) September 5, 2023: Classes begin September 22: Deadline to add courses October 9-15: Reading week December 1: SSHRC application due.	Coursework (2 recommended + PDW) January 2, 2024: Classes begin January 15: Deadline for agreement of supervisory committee (supervisor + 1-2 other members) January 15: Deadline to declare “Thesis option” to John Silva January 19: Deadline to add courses February 19 – 25: Reading Week March 11: - Final date to submit results of incomplete (INC) grades for previous term April 30: Deadline for Supervisory Committee Meeting to complete required progress report and to submit	May 1: Deadline to hand in final version of formal Thesis Proposal due to supervisor and John Silva. (Proposal must be approved prior to submission by the supervisory committee.)

		to Graduate Admin Assistant	
Year 2	November 30: Deadline for Supervisory Committee Meeting to complete required progress report for submission online.	<p>March 4- Final date to submit M.A. Thesis to Department prior to Defence (Spring 2024)</p> <p>March 13- Final date to submit results of incomplete (INC) grades for previous term</p> <p>April 30 – Deadline for Supervisory Committee Meeting. Complete progress report and submit to Graduate Admin Assistant.</p> <p>April 26- Final date to file Thesis with SGS to complete degree requirements if finishing in Spring 2024.</p>	<p>June 8-12- Convocation</p> <p>June-July – Drafts given to committee and third reader for comments and edits (students urged to give supervisor several weeks for draft reading).</p> <p>August 2 – Final date to submit M.A. Thesis to Department prior to Defence (Fall 2024)</p> <p>September 27 – Final Thesis submission date to MacSphere and oral examination completion</p>

All dates are normal deadlines and work may proceed at a faster pace.

5. Ph.D. PROGRAM

A. Ph.D. General Information

The Calendar of the School of Graduate Studies at McMaster University (<https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/index.php>) outlines the minimum requirements for graduate degrees at McMaster University. Here we outline the requirements and

expectations of the Department of Anthropology. Students are responsible for following the guidelines and regulations of the University and the Department.

1. The anthropology graduate program as a whole is administered by a Graduate Committee of three faculty members (currently Dr. Cal Biruk, Dr. Aubrey Cannon, and Dr. Tina Moffat). The Graduate Committee operates with powers delegated to it from the department and its exact role may vary from year to year.
2. Most of a graduate student's training must be obtained in courses offered in anthropology. Four courses are required in the first year of the PhD. Students are welcome to complete 2 courses in each term, or 1 course in term 1 and 3 courses in term 2. With permission of their advisor/supervisor, students may normally take up to two graduate half-courses (3 credits over a single semester) outside of the department. Any exceptions to these requirements will be assessed by the Graduate Committee in consultation with the supervisor.

B. The Ph.D. Curriculum and Schedule

1. Ph.D. students are normally required to take a minimum of four half-courses. Most of a student's training must be obtained in courses offered in anthropology. With permission of their advisor, students may take up to two graduate half-courses outside of the department. All students must maintain a minimum average of B-standing in graduate courses.
2. The Professional Development Workshop (PDW) is mandatory for all first-year graduate students in the Department of Anthropology. This course carries a Pass/Fail at the end of the first year. In order to successfully obtain an MA or PhD from our program, a student has to obtain a Pass in the PWD. A Pass will also be indicated on the official transcript. All second year PhD students without a major scholarship are encouraged to attend PDW sessions associated with Tri-council and other grant proposal writing. Students at any stage of the graduate program can attend the PDW. All students are required to attend the departmental Speakers Series, as a regular part of the PDW.
3. Courses should be selected only after consultation with the advisor and any subsequent change in courses must be discussed with and approved by the advisor/supervisor. Where major gaps exist in the student's background, the department may require that the student take additional courses. Students should be aware that the supervisor in consultation with the Graduate Committee could require a student to complete more than the minimum number of courses required if it believes that the student lacks expertise in areas that are particularly important to their training as an anthropologist.

All Doctoral students must apply each year for all major external scholarships for which they are eligible. These include OGS and SSHRC or CIHR. ** Please note for SSHRC/OGS that the GPA for eligibility is based on the last two years of grades. Students are strongly urged to check with the Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Program (John Silva) to confirm eligibility prior to beginning the application process.

	Term 1 (Sept-Dec) Coursework (2 recommended + PDW) September 5, 2023: Classes begin September 22, 2023: Final date to add courses- October 1 st : Deadline for SSHRC Application (This is an approximate date, and the graduate administrator will circulate specific details. ** PhD students are expected to apply for external funding, especially the SSHRC fellowship.) October 9-15: Reading week	Term 2 (Jan-April) Coursework (2 recommended + PDW) January 2, 2024: Classes begin January 19: Final date to add courses for term 2 January 31: Deadline for agreement of supervisory committee (supervisor + 2-3 other members) February 19 – 25: Reading Week March 11: Final date to submit results of incomplete (INC) grades for previous term April 30: Deadline for Supervisory Committee Meeting. The main objective of this meeting is to agree on and sketch out comprehensive exam paper topics (3). Supervisory committee will also submit the required online progress report.	Term 3 (May-Aug) May 1, 2024: Draft research proposal (see stage 1 below) May-August: Preparation for comprehensive exams and exploratory lab/fieldwork. The first comprehensive exam paper can be submitted as early as the first week of June. During this time, students may also work to develop techniques/methodologies, and conduct preliminary visits to potential sites/collections/organization pertinent to thesis research.
Year 2	September 2, 2024: Deadline to submit first comprehensive paper to graduation administrative assistant. (Feedback from supervisory committee within three weeks from submission date.) October 1 st : Deadline for SSHRC Application (This is an approximate date, and the graduate administrator will circulate specific details. ** PhD students are expected to apply for external funding, especially the SSHRC fellowship.) October 14- Deadline to submit second comprehensive paper to graduation administrative	February 28, 2025: SGS Grant in Aid Due (Comps must be completed prior to applying) February 28: The formal thesis proposal is due approximately one month after successfully defending the comprehensive exams. This proposal should be submitted <u>NO LATER THAN</u> February 28 th . March/April: Present research proposal in the Department speaker series/PDW. (Contact the Graduate Chair to identify a date and time). Ideally this <u>required</u> presentation should occur in the late	May/June 2025: Begin fieldwork

	<p>assistant. (Feedback from supervisory committee within three weeks from submission date.)</p> <p>November 25- Deadline to submit third comprehensive paper to graduate administrative assistant. (Feedback from supervisory committee within three weeks from submission date.)</p> <p>November 30: Deadline for Supervisory Committee Meeting to complete required progress report for submission online.</p> <p>November/December: Work with the ethics office for research projects that need ethics approval.</p> <p>December 2023/January 2024: Once all three exams have been passed by committee members, they are ready to be defended. An oral defense date should be arranged in consultation with the supervisor and the committee, taking place <u>NO LATER THAN</u> January 30th.</p>	<p>spring semester but contact the Graduate Chair if an earlier or later time is necessary.</p> <p>April 30: Deadline for Supervisory Committee Meeting to complete required progress report for submission online.</p>	
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Note: Any student who is going to be late in submitting any part of the comprehensive exam should request an official exception through the supervisor, committee members, and the graduate Chair and committee.

In the event of failing any comprehensive exam paper, the student will have three weeks to rewrite and resubmit. Under such circumstances, the student is to stop working on the succeeding comprehensive exam paper in order to focus on re-writing the failed paper for resubmission in three weeks' time. Upon resubmission of the re-written paper, the student will have a maximum of four weeks to write and submit the succeeding comprehensive exam paper.

Year 3	November 31, 2025: - Supervisory Committee Meeting to fill out required progress report and submit online. October 1: SSHRC Application Due	April 30 2026: Supervisory Committee Meeting for all students.	June-August 2026: Fieldwork normally completed; PhD students begin analysis and writing up of research.
Year 4	November 30, 2026: Supervisory Committee Meeting to fill out required progress report and submit online. ** During this semester, the PhD student should be writing the PhD thesis and seeking feedback from supervisor and committee members.	February 2, 2027: Final Date to Initiate Thesis Defence in Mosaic for June Convocation February 24: Final date to submit Ph.D. Thesis to SGS prior to Defence for those graduating in Spring 2027. (Thesis must be deemed defensible by committee.) Schedule Defence (Spring) March 27- Supervisory Committee Meeting to fill out required progress report and submit online. April 22- Final date to file Ph.D. Thesis with SGS to complete degree requirements for students graduating in June.	June 8-12, 2027: Convocation June 24: Final Date to Initiate Thesis Defence in Mosaic for November Convocation July 17: Final date to submit Ph.D. Thesis to SGS prior to Defence for those graduating in Fall 2027. (Thesis must be deemed defensible by committee.) Schedule defence (Fall) September 26 th – Final date to file Ph.D. Thesis with SGS to complete degree requirements for Fall graduation.

All dates are normal deadlines and work may proceed at a faster pace.

C. Ph.D. Comprehensive Examinations

1. The Ph.D. Comprehensive Examinations are a vital element in determining whether students are prepared to undertake original Ph.D. research. Students write Comprehensive Examinations in order to assess the breadth and robustness of their knowledge of their research areas within their sub-discipline. The exams must demonstrate a student's ability to critically evaluate, synthesize and integrate ideas that reflect the state of current knowledge as it relates to their subfield and to their intended thesis topic(s).

2. In completing the Comprehensive Exams, students show their ability to write a critical review of existing scholarship, and to synthesize research across a broad set of scholarly sources. Students should be able to articulate the major debates, theoretical or methodological concerns, and thematic foci or critical concepts associated with their particular subfield. The exams enable students to identify how their research will result in an original contribution to the discipline. The exams also lay the foundations for their subsequent PhD proposal, demonstrating the student's investment in their future research.

The Comprehensive Examination has both a written and an oral component. First, students are required to write three critical review papers of between 15 and 25 double-spaced pages (not including references). Students discuss with their supervisory committee the format (including page limits), topics and critical foci of the three papers, as well as specifics about the writing format and style. The following information for each sub-discipline provides students some broad guidance as to the scope and expectations for the comprehensive exams. *The supervisor, however, is the best source of guidance for each individual student.*

Sociocultural Anthropology:

Recent sociocultural PhD students in the Department have completed comps with the following topics/titles. Note the emphasis on synthesizing across sources in a focused area of inquiry. In many cases, a comps paper could be a useful resource for crafting a syllabus for a course taught in Sociocultural Anthropology; the specific focus of each paper should be clearly linked to the student's intended research focus, whether in terms of methods, theory, ethnographic fieldsite / geographic focus, or form:

- Emerging Discourses on Care in Anthropology
- The Anthropology of Mental Health in Critical Disability Studies
- Current Topics in Psychological Anthropology
- Anthropology of Secularism
- Ethnographies on Morocco
- Kinship Studies in Anthropology
- Queerness and the State
- Anthropological Perspectives on Death and Dying in the West
- Indigenous and Western Methodologies: Connecting the Bridges
- Webs of Significance or Nets of Exploitation?: The Political Economy of Corporate Cannabis
- Social Identity and Stigma: The German-Canadian Identity
- Memory and the German Past
- Art and Anthropology
- Sensory Anthropology
- Ethnographic Form
- Afterlife, Images, Spectrality, Affect

Archaeology:

In archaeology, exams are focused on comprehension and contrast, rather than comprehensive coverage. That is, each exam should reveal an understanding and articulation of key debates, theories, methods, and applications. Recent archaeological

PhD students in the Department have completed comprehensive essays in the following broad areas:

- Archaeological contributions to specific anthropological debates
- Syntheses of theoretical frameworks (applications and limitations) that address key anthropological issues
- Contrasting methodological pathways (applications and limitations) to address specific archaeological questions
- Contextual factors that shape historical understanding and interpretations in past or current communities
- Contrasting approaches to archaeological questions in a specific regional and/or temporal area

Biological Anthropology:

Recent biological PhD students in the Department have completed comps that help them develop competencies in the following broad areas:

- Biological (Biocultural) underpinnings of conditions (stage of life, disease or injury) and integration into anthropological debates
- Theoretical and/or practical frameworks and approaches to issues in biological anthropology
- Contextual factors that shape understanding and interpretations in past or current communities
- Approaches to public debates on topics
- Regional and/or temporal analysis of a specific area of study.
- Methodological approaches to research issues/topics in biological anthropology – their applications and limitations.

** Students in biological anthropology may undertake a lab-based project and write a critical evaluation of methods used. Note that papers with a lab component have a limit of 15 pages.

If students are interested in seeing examples of recently completed successfully defended comprehensive exams, they should contact John Silva. Some examples are also provided on the Avenue to Learn website for the Professional Development Workshop.

1. The first paper can be submitted from the first week in June but *must be submitted no later than the first week of September of the student's second year*. The second and third papers should normally be submitted at **six-week intervals** (see "Important Dates" section of this handbook). The writing and evaluation process for all comprehensive papers must be completed by the beginning of Winter Term of a student's second year, but candidates are urged to finish well before this date. Any student who is going to be late in submitting any part of the comprehensive exam should request an official exception through the supervisor, committee members, and the graduate chair/committee.
2. Students may submit a two-page single-spaced plan (in the form of an outline, most commonly) and a bibliography to their committee before writing each comprehensive exam topic to ensure that the direction of each paper is clearly understood and agreed upon by the entire supervisory committee. There are no set requirements for what should be included in the plan, but the tentative plan should be no longer than two pages. Students who do opt to submit a plan should expect to receive feedback from

all committee members within one week. Students may not submit drafts of their comprehensive exam papers for comments to their supervisor or to members of their supervisory committees.

3. The Comprehensive Exams must be submitted by the student as Microsoft Word documents directly to the graduate administrative assistant by email and not to the committee. Members of the supervisory committee should evaluate a comprehensive paper within three weeks of its submission to the Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Program (unless there are extraordinary circumstances). Papers will be graded as "Accepted for Oral Defence" or "Fail". Individual committee members' grades and comments on the comprehensive exams should not be discussed until all three exam evaluations have been submitted to the graduate administrative assistant. Once all evaluations for each individual exam are submitted, the graduate administrative assistant will send these results to the student.
4. If a student receives a failing grade from two or more committee members, they must re-write that comprehensive exam paper within three weeks. Under such circumstances, the student is to stop working on the succeeding comprehensive exam paper in order to focus on re-writing the paper for resubmission in three weeks' time. Upon resubmission of the re-write, the student will have a maximum of four weeks to submit the succeeding comprehensive exam paper. Only one re-write per paper is allowed. A maximum of two comprehensive exam papers may be re-written.
5. An oral examination will be held soon after all three comprehensive exam papers are assessed as "Accepted for Oral Defence," normally in December or early January of the student's second year. All discussions with the student at the oral examination are recorded, and a copy will be made available to the student in case of an appeal. The supervisor will normally chair the oral examination. The student and/or committee members can request that an external Chair be present.
6. At the beginning of the defence, the supervisor asks the student to leave so that the committee may establish ground rules for procedure. When the student returns, a maximum of one hour is devoted to discussing each paper, usually with a short break between papers. Any participant can question the appropriateness of a question posed and if it is agreed that it is not appropriate it may be disallowed.
7. When the questioning ends, the student is asked to leave again, and the examining committee decides whether the candidate has passed or failed. The committee votes separately on each written paper and each paper's oral defence. It decides whether each response, in both the written and oral portions of the examination, should be given the grade of Pass with Distinction, Pass, Low Pass, or (on oral portion) Fail.
8. If a student fails any part of the oral examination, a second oral will be scheduled within four weeks. If the student has failed only one section of the examination, then the second oral will re-examine only that section. The second oral examination is normally chaired (without vote) by a delegate of the Department Chair. If the student failed two or more of the papers in the first oral defence, the second oral will examine all three parts. Should a student fail any part of this second oral examination, they are withdrawn from the program.

D. Ph.D. Thesis

Doctoral candidates will be required to submit a scholarly thesis on a topic approved by the

candidate's supervisory committee. The procedure for approval of a thesis topic and proposal is as follows:

E. Ph.D. Thesis: Research Statement and Proposal

1. The development of the student's research proposal is a two-stage process to benefit the student's formulation of the research problem, to facilitate communication with their committee, and to develop professional skills. The stages of the proposal (Draft Research Proposal and Formal Research Proposal) should be viewed as part of the ongoing development of the student's research program.

Stage 1: Draft Research Proposal (Deadline: May 1st, Year One)

- i. The student submits a Draft Research Proposal of 5-8 double-spaced pages (plus bibliography). The Draft Research Proposal is a more detailed version of information contained in applications for funding, revised to reflect and communicate changes in and development of the research agenda. Specific requirements will be worked out with the supervisory committee.
- ii. The rationale for the Draft Research Proposal is that it: 1) Provides a record of the student's developing ideas and changes since entering the program, and communicates those changes to their committee; 2) Provides a basis for planning comprehensive exams; and 3) Helps the student prepare early for grant applications for field funding, since many deadlines occur in the Fall of the second year, when the student is writing the comprehensive exams.

Stage 2: Formal Research Proposal (To be submitted to a student's committee members within one month after successfully defending the comprehensive exams).

- i. The student prepares a Formal Research Proposal of 10-20 double-spaced pages after they complete their comprehensive exams. It should be a formal research proposal in the style of a major funding agency, including abstract, theoretical concerns, background, research contributions, key research questions, methodology, budget and schedule. An excellent model is the Wenner-Gren Foundation Dissertation Fieldwork Grants application, available at <https://wennergren.org/grants-fellowships/>
 - ii. The rationale for the Formal Research Proposal is that it should: 1) Propel the student into their research with a specific and detailed plan; 2) Demonstrate clear intellectual and methodological rationales for research, and show clear ability to locate research within an intellectual trajectory/debate; and 3) Enable the student to gain experience preparing a full and detailed formal proposal (an essential professional skill).
2. A candidate's formal thesis proposal must be approved by their supervisory committee before the student engages in fieldwork. For research projects that need ethics approval, students must work with the ethics office to obtain ethics clearance prior to engaging fieldwork.
 3. A version of the proposal must be presented at the Professional Development Workshop or a departmental symposium for open discussion before the student undertakes research. The committee is encouraged to be present for this 15-minute talk (followed by a Q&A). To set up this presentation, contact the graduate chair and the Administrative

Assistant for the Graduate Program.

4. Students are expected to seek outside funding for field research. Appropriate funding opportunities should be discussed with the supervisory committee.

F. Ph.D. Dissertation

Within two months of completion of their research or fieldwork, students must submit to their Supervisory Committee and the Graduate Committee: (1) A report on their fieldwork; and (2) a plan for thesis writing. Students will meet with their committee to discuss the reports and to set goals for thesis writing. The student and supervisory committee will agree on a deadline for submission of a first thesis chapter, normally within three months of the meeting. Close collaboration between students who have completed fieldwork and their supervisory committees is intended to help structure the difficult transition from fieldwork to dissertation writing.

General instructions regarding dissertation format, length and acceptable methods of reproduction can be obtained from the School of Graduate Studies website: <https://graduate.mcmaster.ca/current-students/completing-your-degree>

In some cases the student and committee may decide on a “sandwich thesis” option, a Ph.D. thesis made up of previously published peer-reviewed works (or submitted for peer review). If this option is deemed the best avenue, see section 1.3 (“Criteria for Acceptance of a Sandwich Thesis”) and section 5.0 (Preparation of the “Sandwich” Ph.D. Thesis) in the Guide for the Preparation of Masters and Doctoral Theses.

https://gs.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/10/Prep_Guide_Masters_and_Doctoral_Theses_August-2021.pdf .

When the dissertation is in its final stages (10-12 weeks prior to defence), the student begins the electronic thesis defence request program:

<https://gs.mcmaster.ca/current-students/completing-your-degree/doctoral-degree/>

The final dissertation must be approved by the student’s supervisory committee, an external examiner from outside the university, and in some cases an internal reviewer from inside the university but outside the department. The dissertation must be orally defended.

G. Oral Dissertation Defence

In this examination, the candidate will defend the dissertation and answer questions the committee finds appropriate. SGS will appoint a Chair of the Examination Committee. The defence normally will consist of three members of the supervisory committee, and an external examiner. If the external examiner is within easy travelling distance of the university, they will be invited by SGS to attend. If the external examiner cannot attend, the student and supervisor will contact SGS for further instruction. If the external examiner is not able to attend, either in person or by Skype/Zoom, any questions they have raised will be asked by another member of the defence committee. Dissertations are public documents and cannot be classified as secret or not accessible.

A guide for the preparation of theses may be obtained from the School of Graduate Studies, and further procedural information is provided by the graduate calendar.

https://gs.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/10/Prep_Guide_Masters_and_Doctoral_Theses_August-2021.pdf

H. Ph.D. Language Requirement

There is no formal language requirement, but in cases where the student needs facility in a foreign language, either to read literature or for use in field research, the Supervisory Committee has the authority to require the student to demonstrate acceptable facility in that language. Students may demonstrate acceptable facility by obtaining a grade of B+ or better in a university course or an accredited language course in the language chosen. The Graduate Committee makes final decisions on what the department recognizes as an accredited non-university course.

I. Leaves of Absence

To request a “Leave of Absence,” please consult the School of Graduate Studies calendar. https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=48&navoid=9525#2-5-7_leaves_of_absence

For information pertaining to “Leave of Absence” for Teaching Assistant, see CUPE Collective Agreement, Article 19 (on page 36) <https://cupe3906.org/files/2023/04/U1-CA-2022-FINAL-FINAL-VERSION-for-printing.pdf>

Accommodations

The Department of Anthropology understands that barriers to participation exist and adjustments to policies and practices of the University are sometimes required. This is accomplished through the prevention, identification and removal of barriers (such as a physical, architectural, technological, information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier or learning barrier, or a policy or practice) within the University systems, structures and policies. The Department abides by the “Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities Policy:

<https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Academic-Accommodations-Policy.pdf>

K. Discrimination and Code of Conduct

All members of the University Community, including the Department of Anthropology, have a right to study, work, and live in an environment that is free of discrimination and harassment. Discrimination and/or harassment on the grounds articulated in the Ontario Human Rights Code will not be accepted. The Department of Anthropology abides by the policies and procedure outlined in the McMaster Discrimination and Harassment Policy

<https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Discrimination-and-Harassment-Policy.pdf>

This policy prohibits Discrimination and/or Harassment on the grounds articulated in the Ontario Human Rights Code: age; ancestry, colour, race; citizenship; ethnic origin; place of origin; creed; disability; family status; marital status (including single status); gender identity, gender expression; receipt of public assistance (in housing only); record of offences (in employment only); sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding); and sexual orientation. Any concerns - whether regarding *other graduate students, faculty members, or departmental staff* - should be reported to the grad chair.

Students should also be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct regarding conflict of interest, sexual harassment, and other matters. See details in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities

6. Appendices

A. Appendix I

It should be noted at the outset that admission to the Master of Arts program does not guarantee that a request to transfer (accelerated transfer) into the Ph.D. program (Anthropology) will be granted. This should be considered as an exceptional process.

To initiate the accelerated transfer process to the Ph.D. program a supervisor who consents to the change must be identified and the student should normally obtain a minimum GPA of 11/12 in courses taken during the first year of graduate study in the department of Anthropology. Furthermore, a request in writing must be made with mutual consent from both the student and their proposed supervisor no later than May 1st after the student has completed one year of graduate study.

In reviewing an application for an MA student who wishes to transfer into the Ph.D. program, the Graduate Committee will consider factors such as the overall performance of the student and the likely ability to form a properly constituted supervisory committee (see Section 3). A student who selects the thesis option will have to complete a thesis in the event that they are not accepted for direct transfer into the Ph.D. program. The student must be aware that decisions made regarding the MRP or thesis option on the deadline cannot be changed.

Please note that direct transfer to the Ph.D. program during the second year of study (accelerated transfer) is contingent upon financial resources available to the department or the supervisor at the time an application is made. Decisions on funding for the coming year are normally made in March.

A student who is successful in transferring directly (accelerated transfer) from the MA to the Ph.D. program through such procedure will not receive a MA in Anthropology from McMaster University.

A student who has successfully accelerated to the Ph.D. program through such a procedure will have already completed four graduate courses with the minimum GPA of 11/12 and a Pass in the graduate professional workshop in the first year of graduate study. A student who has successfully accelerated through such a procedure will start as a second year student of the Ph.D. program (see Section 3B for regulations relating to the Ph.D. program)

Latest Updates September 6, 2023