

# Department of English and Cultural Studies

## McMaster University

### Graduate Handbook 2023-2024

Note: Since ECS graduate programs have undergone some revisions over the years, students should consult the handbook produced the year in which they registered for their program.

In the event that any information in this handbook differs from what appears in the [Graduate Calendar](#), then the Graduate Calendar is considered correct.

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## MA in Cultural Studies and Critical Theory

### General

Please consult the Regulations for the Master of Arts Degree in the [School of Graduate Studies Calendar](#). It is particularly important to be aware of the regulations governing such matters as Full-time and Part-time Status, Leaves of Absence, and Thesis Supervision (Major Research Project). All graduate students, including part-time students, must complete the courses [SGS #101- Academic Research Integrity and Ethics](#) and [SGS #201- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\) Training](#) within the first month after their admission to graduate studies at McMaster.

### Program Requirements and Schedule

- Core Courses: CULTRST 732\* and 733\*
- 4 one-term elective courses (or equivalent)
- Major Research Project (30-40 pages plus bibliography)

All students will take the two compulsory half-year courses: CULTRST 732: *Foundations in Cultural Studies and Critical Theory* and CULTRST 733: *Problems in Cultural Studies*. Students will be coming into the program from different disciplinary backgrounds and with different degrees of previous exposure to cultural studies and critical theory. The core courses will give all students a common background in these fields and will also function as a central intellectual meeting-place for students, who will be encouraged throughout the program to create a community of ideas and discussion as well as to pursue their individual projects. In addition, they will be required to take four one-term elective courses (or the equivalent), usually consisting of two in each of the fall and winter terms, leaving the period from May-August available for work on the Major Research Project.

<u>Fall</u>	<u>Winter</u>	<u>Summer</u>
CULTRST 732*	CULTRST 733*	Major Research Project
Elective 1	Elective 3	
Elective 2	Elective 4	

Students who elect to take a Spring or Summer course need to confirm supervisors and commence work on their MRPs early in the Winter term to ensure the timely completion of all program requirements. Up to two elective courses may be taken outside the department, subject to approval by the CSCT Director and with the permission of the department/program offering them. The Department of English and Cultural Studies does not offer Independent Reading Courses. In each course, students must achieve a minimum grade of B-. Work for fall term courses must be completed by the last day of the fall semester examination period (before the holiday break in December). Work for winter term and fall/winter term courses must be completed by the last day of the winter semester examination period (end of April).

Students will also be required to complete a **Major Research Project (MRP) between 30 to 40 pages in length (not including bibliography)**. Note: This is a strict upper page limit; MRPs must not exceed the maximum length. Students will develop the research project in the first two terms and will work on it in a concentrated fashion over the spring and summer terms. Students are encouraged to consult with potential supervisors as early as possible in the fall term. In consultation with their supervisor, students will develop a plan of research appropriate to the time available for study and carefully considering the length of the MRP. An information session, scheduled during the core class in November, will offer students advice on how to frame a topic and craft a strong proposal. Draft proposals (1,000 words plus bibliography) are due, to be submitted electronically to the CSCT program director, by **Friday, January 26, 2024**. A workshop, scheduled during the core class the following week, will give students the opportunity to solicit feedback on their draft proposals from faculty and other students. Final MRP proposals (1000 words plus working bibliography), along with the cover sheet listing the project title and signed by a faculty member who has agreed to supervise the project, must be submitted electronically (via email) to the Graduate Administrative Assistant by **Monday, February 26, 2024**. (The cover sheet will be made available by the office as a fillable form.) Readers will be assigned by the CSCT Director, in consultation with students and supervisors, and with an eye to matching expertise to projects and to balancing supervisory workloads. The Executive Committee will evaluate proposals on a pass/fail basis, returning unsuccessful proposals to students for revision and resubmission if needed.

All CSCT MA students will discuss their in-progress research projects at a symposium on **Wednesday, May 22, 2024**. This is an opportunity to share particular issues, ideas, or problems that you'd like feedback on from colleagues and faculty. To foster an accessible symposium experience, students will be given the option of delivering a 10-minute presentation as part of a panel and Q&A session open to all colleagues and faculty, or they may opt to discuss their research in a workshop with co-participants and faculty facilitators. The summer months will be devoted to independent research toward the writing of the MRP, submitting drafts to supervisors, and seeking advice or answers to questions as necessary. A draft of the whole MRP must be submitted to the supervisor by **Monday, July 29, 2024**. The draft will be returned with comments and suggestions for revision to the student by **August 9, 2024**. A final, revised draft of the MRP must be submitted to the supervisor and reader by **Monday, August 19, 2024**, at which point the supervisor and reader will evaluate the project (pass or fail). While they may, at their discretion, discuss elements of the project with the student while it is in process, readers generally read only the revised draft of the MRP for the purposes of evaluation.

The Graduate Administrative Assistant should be notified by email once the MRP has been delivered to the supervisor and reader. Supervisors and readers will return grades and comments to students and the Graduate Administrative Assistant by **Monday, August 26, 2024**. If there is a difference in mark, we will convene a meeting of the markers to resolve and confirm the grade. If necessary, we will go to a third marker.

An electronic copy of the MRP, with any corrections to the typescript suggested by the supervisor and second reader, must be submitted to the Graduate Administrative Assistant by **Monday, September 9, 2024**. Please note that students will have the option of archiving their MRPs on

MacSphere/Avenue to Learn or to opt-out of posting online. Students will be able to indicate their preference on the provided Final MRP Submission form.

The MRP should be 30-40 pages double-spaced (excluding block quotations, footnotes/endnotes, and bibliography, which should be single-spaced), using Times New Roman 12-point font, and with 1" (2.5 cm) margins all around. Page numbers should be included in the top right corner of each page. It is the candidate's responsibility to make sure that the manuscript is prepared according to university requirements in every respect.

Completion time for the course work and the research project will be 12 months of full-time study. If the candidate is unable to submit the MRP by the end of September, but intends to finish it, they must re-register. Ordinarily there is no financial support for master's students entering a 4th term. If a candidate does not re-register and later wishes to be readmitted to the program in order to submit the MRP, fees will be charged retroactively for one full year. Students wishing to be readmitted must petition the Director of the CSCT program.

### **Course Selection**

During the summer months, incoming students will receive a form asking them to indicate their preferences for elective courses. The department will do its best to accommodate these preferences. Confirmation of course selection will be sent out late in the summer. Graduate courses must have a minimum enrolment of eight to run and are limited, in most cases, to a maximum of fifteen (core courses may be slightly larger). Graduate courses offered by the Department of English and Cultural Studies meet once a week during the fall and winter terms. Active participation in class discussion is expected in all our graduate courses. Please see grading scale in Appendix A.

### **Major Research Project**

The Major Research Project should be an analysis of a well-defined topic, framed by a clear research question, and firmly situated in relevant critical conversation(s). In addition to elucidating its thesis with detailed clarity, the MRP should also demonstrate the study's broader relevance and implications. All sources should be cited according to the conventions of a recognized academic style (MLA, Chicago, etc.). The MRP can derive from a term paper, but must be a significant development of the topic, and not just an expansion. The project must provide either an original contribution to knowledge or a significant re-framing of the issues or topics in question. Students who wish to produce an MRP in an alternative format (e.g., a video, art or photography exhibit, or an elementary/secondary school syllabus) are encouraged to consult with potential supervisors early in the fall term. Creative/alternative MRPs must include a significant theoretical component, ordinarily consisting of a minimum 15-20-page paper, situating the creative project in relevant historical and critical contexts, and explaining its contribution to knowledge. Projects involving research participants (e.g., interviews, focus groups or surveys) must receive approval from the [McMaster Research Ethics Board](#). It is important that students requiring ethics review begin consultation with the MREB in the fall, in order to complete the

process before embarking on research. Examples of MRPs from previous years can be viewed on the CSCT MA Program - Reference Site on [Avenue to Learn](#): see Content > MRP Proposals.

### Calendar of Events and Deadlines

- Fall*                    *Begin planning your Major Research Project: Gather preliminary ideas for the problem or question you would like to address, sketch a possible outline, assemble bibliographic materials using the MLA guidelines, etc. Make a point of meeting members of the CSCT faculty; consult with potential supervisors/readers. If necessary, consult with Research Ethics Board.*
- Early Oct.            SSHRC doctoral applications due on the [SSHRC On-Line System](#) for those who are applying to doctoral programs (NB: some PhD programs have Dec. application deadlines).
- Mid Nov.             Attend MRP proposal information session in core course.
- Winter*                *Prepare MRP proposals; secure tentative agreement with supervisor, to be confirmed by CSCT Executive Committee; readers are assigned by Director in consultation with students and supervisors.*
- Early Feb.           MRP proposal workshop in core class (draft proposals to be submitted Friday, Jan. 26 to be distributed to peer and faculty readers).
- Feb. 26                Final MRP proposal submitted with supervisor's signature to Director of CSCT and Graduate Administrator for approval by the CSCT committee. Readers are assigned by the committee in consultation with students and supervisors. (English department policy stipulates that faculty normally supervise no more than two students seeking to fulfill MRP degree requirements. For this reason, among others, the Director and CSCT Executive Committee bear responsibility for final approval of all committee configurations within this degree program.)
- Spring/  
Summer*                *Prepare for the CSCT Research Symposium. Draft and revise your MRP in correspondence with your supervisor. Ideally your supervisor should see drafts as you progress, with the penultimate version due July 29. Be sure to use your supervisor as a resource for fielding questions as they emerge in the course of your writing over the summer months.*
- May 22                CSCT Research Symposium.
- July 29                Submission of complete draft of MRP to supervisor.
- Aug. 9                Supervisor returns MRP to student with comments and suggestions.

- Aug. 19 Final copy of MRP submitted to the supervisor, reader, and Graduate Administrator.
- Aug. 26 Submission of final grade and comments to student and to the Graduate Administrator. MRPs are marked on a pass/fail basis. The supervisor and second reader will also provide brief comments.
- Sept. 9 Last possible day for final submission of corrected, edited manuscript in electronic form to the Graduate Administrator. The CSCT program will keep an archive of completed projects for future students' and supervisors' reference.

**Please Note:** The **due dates listed above are to be strictly adhered to**. They have been calibrated not only to offer students clear markers of accomplishment as they move through the year-long program, but also to provide faculty members with reasonable and appropriate amounts of time to return thoughtful feedback to students. In all instances above, faculty have been given at least a week to respond with comments to MRP proposals—and at least two weeks in the case of completed MRP drafts. Kindly respect this timeline.

## MA in English

### General

Please consult the Regulations for the Master of Arts Degree in the [School of Graduate Studies Calendar](#). It is particularly important to be aware of the regulations governing such matters as Full-time and Part-time Status, Leaves of Absence, and Thesis Supervision (Major Research Project). All graduate students, including part-time students, must complete the courses [SGS #101- Academic Research Integrity and Ethics](#) and [SGS #201- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\) Training](#) within the first month after their admission to graduate studies at McMaster.

### Program Requirements and Schedule

- Core Course: English 799A/B
- 6 one-term elective courses (or equivalent)

English 799A/B: *Critical and Creative Approaches to Literary Studies: Sharing Knowledges in/with/for Communities* acts as a hub for student-centred community and discussion regarding the Public Humanities. Students in this course devise individual public-facing research and research-creation projects, and successfully present their projects at a symposium in early August.

In addition, English MA students complete six one-term elective courses (or the equivalent). Typically, students divide up these electives so that they take three in the fall term, two in the winter term, and one in the spring/summer term.

<b>Fall</b>	<b>Winter</b>	<b>Spring/Summer</b>
Elective 1	Elective 4	
Elective 2	Elective 5	Elective 6
Elective 3	English 799A	English 799B

Another possible configuration is to take three electives in the fall term and three electives in the winter term.

<b>Fall</b>	<b>Winter</b>	<b>Spring/Summer</b>
Elective 1	Elective 4	
Elective 2	Elective 5	
Elective 3	Elective 6	
	English 799A	English 799B

Up to two elective courses may be taken outside the department, subject to approval by the Graduate Chair and with the permission of the department/program offering them. The Department of English and Cultural Studies does not offer Independent Reading Courses. In each elective course, students must achieve a minimum grade of B-.



Work for fall term courses must be completed by the last day of the fall semester examination period (before the holiday break in December). Work for winter term and fall/winter term courses must be completed by the last day of the winter semester examination period (end of April). Candidates must submit all summer coursework, including project work for English 799A/B, by early August so that final grades may be sent to the School of Graduate Studies and the candidate may graduate in the Fall Convocation. Ordinarily there is no financial support for master's students entering a 4<sup>th</sup> term.

### **Course Selection**

During the summer months, incoming MA students will receive a form asking them to indicate their preferences for elective courses. The department will do its best to accommodate these preferences. Confirmation of course selection will be sent out late in the summer. Graduate courses must have a minimum enrolment of eight to run and are limited, in most cases, to a maximum of fifteen. Up to two one-term courses may be taken outside the department, subject to the permission of offering departments and with approval of the Graduate Chair; please see the Graduate Administrative Assistant for details.

Graduate courses meet once a week during the fall and winter terms, but during the compacted summer term they meet twice a week. Given the condensed nature of summer courses, students are advised to avoid travel or absences from campus that would require them to miss a full week or more (including for the purposes of attending conferences such as the annual Congress). Full attendance and active participation in class discussion is expected in all our graduate courses. Please see grading scale in Appendix A.

### **Part-time MA Program**

Students may be admitted to the MA program on a part-time basis. The requirements for the part-time MA are the same as those for the full-time MA, but the student completes them over a longer period of time, normally three years. The department advises that part-time students not attempt more than two one-semester graduate courses, or the equivalent, in any given year. Although the School of Graduate Studies permits a part-time student to take up to three such courses per year, this would constitute a serious burden for someone with a full-time job. *Note: Scheduling of graduate classes varies from year to year, and that they normally occur within the hours of 9:30am and 5:30pm.*

## PhD in English

The PhD program in English normally entails four years of study. Please consult the Regulations for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in the [School of Graduate Studies Calendar](#). It is particularly important to be aware of the regulations governing such matters as Full-time and Part-time Status, Leaves of Absence, and Thesis Supervision. All graduate students, including part-time students, must complete the courses [SGS #101- Academic Research Integrity and Ethics](#) and [SGS #201- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\) Training](#) within the first month after their admission to graduate studies at McMaster.

### Courses

PhD candidates will successfully complete six graduate courses: five one-term graduate courses in Year 1 of the program, and the Doctoral Seminar in Year 2.

During the summer months, incoming Year 1 PhD students will receive a form asking them to indicate their preferences for elective courses. The department will do its best to accommodate these preferences. Confirmation of course selection will be sent out late in the summer. Graduate courses must have a minimum enrolment of eight to run and are limited, in most cases, to a maximum of fifteen. Up to two one-term courses may be taken outside the department, subject to the permission of offering departments and with approval of the Graduate Chair; please see the Graduate Administrative Assistant for details.

Graduate courses generally meet once a week during the fall and winter terms. With the exception of the 702 Doctoral Seminar, which meets bi-weekly through Year 2, these courses will normally be completed in the first year of the program. Occasionally a PhD student may complete a summer course with the approval of their supervisor and the Graduate Chair. During the compacted summer term graduate courses meet twice a week. Students who have permission to enrol in a summer course are advised to avoid travel or absences from campus that would require them to miss a full week or more (including for the purposes of attending conferences such as the annual Congress).

Students must achieve grades of at least B- in each course, with the exception of the Doctoral Seminar, which is graded on a Pass/Fail basis. Full attendance and active participation in class discussion is expected in all our graduate courses. Please see grading scale in Appendix A.

### Supervisory Committee and Preliminary Thesis Proposal

Each student's PhD supervisory committee consists of a supervisor and two other faculty members, appointed by the Graduate Studies Committee.

By March 1 of the first year of the program, students must identify an area of specialization and submit a 1,000-1,200-word preliminary thesis proposal (with bibliography) signed by a potential supervisor and reader for approval by the Graduate Studies Committee. At the time of submission, students should append the preliminary thesis form, provided by the department,

signed by two departmental faculty members who agree to act as thesis supervisor and first reader. An email from faculty members confirming approval is acceptable in lieu of a physical or digital signature on the form itself.

Normally, the first signer will be named supervisor. In cases where the first signer is already heavily committed to graduate supervision, the Graduate Studies Committee may need to appoint the second signer or another member of the department as supervisor. The third member of the committee will be appointed by the Graduate Studies Committee after consultation with the supervisor, who will have discussed possible third members with the student. The supervisor and one reader must be full-time members of the English and Cultural Studies Department; the other member of the committee may be from outside the department in cases where the thesis topic warrants such external advice. Exceptions are subject to approval by the supervisory committee and the Graduate Studies Committee.

Requests for a change of supervisor or for a change in the composition of the supervisory committee must be submitted to the Graduate Studies Committee for approval. First, the student should consult either the thesis supervisor or the Graduate Chair. Whoever receives this request should ensure that the proposed change is communicated to all members of the supervisory committee. The student should then proceed to make their request in writing to the Graduate Chair.

Please see Appendix B for guidelines on the responsibilities of PhD supervisees and supervisors. Students and supervisors are expected to regularly, throughout the degree, to discuss the student's progress. The frequency of such meetings should be negotiated between supervisors and students, and will vary, depending on the stage of the program. Meetings with other members of the supervisory committee should also take place as needed, to review feedback on completed work and negotiate schedules and processes for ongoing research and writing. The School of Graduate Studies requires that at least one meeting take place between the student and the entire committee each year, to review the student's progress and the quality of supervision received, and to outline plans for the coming year. Please see below for further details.

### **Annual Supervisory Committee Meeting**

All PhD students are required by the School of Graduate Studies to hold an annual meeting with their supervisory committee to discuss the student's progress towards meeting degree requirements. This meeting must include all members of the student's supervisory committee. In the Department of English and Cultural Studies, these meetings are normally scheduled by the student and their committee between April and June. Once a date for the meeting has been scheduled and the graduate administrator has been informed, students will be prompted by email to complete an online progress report.

In this report, students should provide details of progress made since the last report (or toward meeting degree requirements since beginning the program if completing the first report). Topics typically include (but are not limited to):

- courses completed
- comprehensive examination preparation/writing/oral defense
- thesis proposals submitted or approved
- research undertaken
- dissertation chapters drafted/revised
- conference presentations
- publications
- submission of conference abstracts or journal articles for review, even if unsuccessful
- external funding or grant applications, even if unsuccessful
- teaching, including details about responsibilities, teaching innovations, etc.
- community engagement/activism/volunteer work/public outreach
- service to the university or the community

Students should also prepare for the meeting by giving some thought to their goals for the coming year, as goals will be discussed and set during the meeting and recorded on the meeting report form. Supervisory committee members will take the student's progress on their goals into account when determining their assessment of the student's progress the following year, so it is important for the student and committee to work collaboratively to set goals that are achievable, based on the student's circumstances, including any formal academic accommodations they may have.

Students are encouraged to direct questions about the annual meeting and/or report form to their supervisor or to the Graduate Chair. The annual meeting and progress report are important because they:

1. record the student's progress toward completing their degree;
2. give students an opportunity to highlight to committee members activities that may not be recorded in any other official venue and to consult with them about challenges they have encountered in their academic work and strategies for overcoming them; and
3. provide the supervisory committee members with information about the student's achievements over the year, on which they will base their annual assessment using the following criteria supplied by the School of Graduate Studies:

#### *Committee's Assessment*

Evaluation of overall progress at this stage in the degree development during the interval since beginning PhD studies (if this is the first Committee meeting) or since the last PhD Supervisory Committee meeting:

#### **[E] Excellent**

The student has exceeded expectations in terms of academic and/or research progress. This rating may reflect exceptional initiatives taken by the student to address unexpected challenges in their course of study.

#### **[G] Good**

The student is meeting and achieving all expectations in terms of academic and/or research progress. There are no areas of concern with respect to meeting goals and milestones for research and

academic progress. This rating is to be used for students who show promise for completing the degree in a timely manner.

#### [S] Satisfactory

The student is meeting and achieving most expectations in terms of academic and/or research progress. There is some concern around the pace and/or the meeting of goals and milestones for research and academic progress. The committee has some concerns with the student's skills growth and subject area expertise. This rating is to be used when the committee identifies areas for improvement and where some expectations at this stage of degree development are not being met. Details about concerns should be provided in Part C.

#### [M] Marginal\*

The student is meeting and achieving some expectations in terms of academic and/or research progress. There is significant concern around the pace and/or the meeting of goals and milestones for research and academic progress. The committee has significant concerns with the student's skill growth and subject area expertise. This rating is to be used when the committee identifies several areas for improvement and where significant expectations at this stage of degree development are not being met. Areas for improvement should be provided in Part C.

#### [U] Unsatisfactory\*

There is an unreasonably low rate of academic and/or research progress. The committee has serious concerns about the pace and/or the meeting of goals and milestones for research and academic progress, and whether these goals can be achieved in a reasonable period of time. Areas of serious concern should be provided in Part C. In cases where this category is used, the program should determine whether the student should be required to withdraw or be allowed to continue in the program until their next committee meeting.

\* If a student receives a marginal or unsatisfactory rating, they will be given direction by the committee on areas for improvement. The student will also receive a letter from the Faculty of Humanities Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, outlining the importance of addressing the concerns and steps to take if the student feels they are receiving unsatisfactory supervision. In the case of a marginal or unsatisfactory rating, the supervisory committee will be required to meet again in 6 months to assess whether the concerns outlined in the report have been addressed. A second marginal or unsatisfactory rating will lead to automatic withdrawal of the student from the program.

### **Doctoral Research Seminar**

During Year 2 of the PhD, doctoral students complete English 702, Doctoral Research Seminar. This mandatory course focuses on practical elements of research and other aspects of professionalization in literary and cultural studies. Topics may include strategies for formulating research problems; preparing for and completing comprehensive exams and the detailed thesis proposal; gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing primary and secondary materials; building academic community; and disseminating research through conferences and publication in a variety of media.

English 702 meets every second week over the Fall and Winter terms. Participation in this 3-credit course is graded on a pass/fail basis.

### The Comprehensive Examinations

University regulations require that PhD candidates demonstrate “a comprehensive knowledge of the discipline or sub-discipline to which their field of research belongs.” PhD candidates in English and Cultural Studies satisfy this requirement by submitting two written papers, a *Field Paper* and a *Topic Paper*, and by defending both in an oral examination. The two written papers are due by February 28 of the second year of study. The oral examination of both papers will follow within 10 business days of submission.

The *Field Paper* is designed to develop broad expertise in the wider field of knowledge the candidate’s research will engage. The *Topic Paper* describes how the candidate’s dissertation intervenes in that field and the particular contribution it will make. Both papers are to be researched and written concurrently by the candidate, are to be between 25 and 30 double-spaced pages in length (not including bibliography).

The *Field Paper* is meant to be capacious, reaching beyond the student’s immediate research topic, and should encompass a wide variety of genres, authors, and critical approaches. The *Field Paper* should broaden the student’s understanding of their chosen field of expertise in preparation not just for the dissertation but also for job interviews and undergraduate teaching. While the *Field Paper* could take the form of an exploration of two or three foundational concepts that inform the field, the *Topic Paper* should explain how the dissertation will contribute to its field or fields, specifying the critical approach to be adopted and engaging in more focused discussion of the key texts and critical ideas the candidate’s research will explore. Ideally, the *Topic Paper* could serve as a draft of the introduction or first chapter of the dissertation, while in the *Field Paper*, the student will map out a broad area of knowledge, demonstrating both critical and historical awareness of how the chosen field has been defined and adopting a critical stance of their own.

By April 28 of in Year 1, the student will submit, for approval by the Graduate Studies Committee, a comprehensive examination reading list for the *Field Paper* and *Topic Paper*, along with confirmation of their chosen field for the exam. This reading list must be devised in consultation with, and approved by, the supervisor and committee members, prior to submission. The reading list should consist of roughly 120 works of literature and criticism (with approximately 30 pages of criticism or theory, 50-75 pages of short story writing, or 200 lines of poetry equaling one work, a play or film equaling 2 works, and a substantial book counting for 3 works).

Students should define their field(s) in consultation with their supervisory committee; candidates regularly select from some of the following fields, for which the department currently has supervisory capacity:

- 18th, 19th, 20th, or 21st century British Literatures and Cultures
- Gender, Feminist and/or Sexuality Studies
- Global Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

- Auto/biography studies
- Canadian Literatures and Cultures
- Critical Disability Studies / Mad Studies
- Critical Race Studies
- Cultural Studies and/or Critical Theory
- Environmental Humanities
- Indigenous Literatures & Cultures
- Material Cultures
- Medieval or Early Modern English Literatures and Cultures
- Postcolonial Literatures and Cultures
- Science Fiction

Students are required in their reading list to substantially cover one of these broad areas, or another recognizable field, subject to the approval of their supervisory committee and the Graduate Studies Committee. In constructing lists, students should aim to include a balance of foundational works and works that address recent debates in the field, organizing selections into sections whose subjects will be determined by the field and topic. Lists should indicate the approximate page count for each selection, adding to a total of 120 works. Sample lists are available for consultation on Avenue to Learn. When complete, the reading list will be submitted to the Graduate Studies Committee for approval and a copy of the approved reading list placed in the student's file.

Once the reading list is approved by the Graduate Chair, the student should arrange a schedule of meetings with committee members to discuss progress in writing both papers. Each committee member meets with the candidate on two separate occasions, typically once in the summer and once in the fall term. The onus is on the candidate to prepare in advance for these meetings. **Committee members should not review or comment upon the student's actual *Field Paper* or *Topic Papers*; these are examination papers and, while general discussion with supervisory committee members is encouraged, drafts of the papers cannot be read and commented upon by committee members.** Note that a candidate in the field of Medieval Literature must demonstrate an ability to read Old and Middle English in the course of these meetings to the satisfaction of their committee.

The oral examination will normally be two hours in length. Examiners may pose specific questions about the two papers, about works on the list that are not discussed in either paper, and about pedagogy and the fit between the candidate's work and relevant undergraduate courses. As a means of ensuring sufficient breadth of knowledge, the Department requires that, at the oral examination, candidates demonstrate a mature ability to articulate a range of dominant issues in their field(s) and to show familiarity with a wide range of authors and genres.

The candidate's Comprehensive Examination papers and oral exam will be graded pass/fail. If the student has failed either written paper, that paper must be rewritten before proceeding to the oral exam. The second attempt must be submitted within three months of the first submission. If the candidate fails the oral examination, they must make a second attempt within three months. Failure to pass any part of the examination after two attempts will result in withdrawal from the program.

## Detailed Thesis Proposal and Thesis

After completing the Comprehensive Examination, the candidate will write a thesis normally of between 200 and 250 pages (not including bibliography). During this period the candidate is expected to meet with their supervisory committee at least once a year, in addition to regular meetings with the supervisor and other committee members as necessary.

Following completion of the Comprehensive Examination in late February/early March, each candidate will work on their detailed thesis proposal (2,000 words + bibliography). This detailed proposal will represent a provisional working plan rather than an unalterable contract; the focus, structure and title are always liable to change during the process of composition.

This document is due to the Graduate Studies Committee by June 30 of Year 2. Please include the proposed full title of the thesis; a description of its scope, methodology and purpose; an outline of the project's general structure; and a bibliography of the primary and secondary materials that you intend to use. The Graduate Administrator will provide a form that must be signed by the candidate's supervisory committee along with the detailed proposal.

The thesis will be developed by the candidate in consultation with the supervisory committee. Written portions of the thesis should normally be presented to the thesis supervisor for comment and approval before they are given to other members of the supervisory committee to read. Any substantive change in thesis topic must be agreed to by the supervisory committee and endorsed by the Graduate Studies Committee, which will also make arrangements for changes in the supervisory committee when necessary.

Candidates should carefully consult the [School of Graduate Studies](#) document, [Guide for the Preparation of Theses](#). This guide gives general information about university requirements concerning the writing and submitting of graduate theses, and covers such topics as fonts, sequence of parts, and so forth. The official bibliographic guide for the graduate program in English is the most recent edition of *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, with the following exception: set-off quotations, endnotes/footnotes, and bibliographical entries in the thesis, should be single-spaced, not double-spaced.

It is the candidate's responsibility to make sure that the manuscript has been carefully prepared according to accepted usage and that it meets the university's requirements in every respect. In some instances, a thesis may require special treatment. The candidate should consult their supervisory committee if it appears that a divergence from the standard practice is desirable. Such divergences may be permitted if they are consistent and unambiguous and can be defended with sound, scholarly reasoning at the oral examination. In general, however, adherence to the standard rules is required, and a thesis that is unsatisfactory in this respect will be returned for correction.

Note: All other degree requirements must be completed before the thesis is submitted to the School of Graduate Studies.



## Thesis Oral Examination

The candidate will be required to defend the thesis at an oral examination specifically convened by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. The School of Graduate Studies Calendar contains information on the composition of the examining committee and a description of the procedure for the oral defense.

## PhD Timetable

### Year 1

September to April: Registration in five one-term courses (or equivalent).

Early Oct: SSHRC doctoral applications due on the [SSHRC On-Line System](#) for those who are applying.

December: Draft of Preliminary Thesis proposal to two Department Faculty members in the field (proposed supervisor plus one reader).

March 1: Submission of the preliminary thesis proposal (1,000-1,200 words plus bibliography) along with identification of a field of specialization.

March/April: Work with supervisory committee to finalize Comprehensive Examination reading list and area. Submission of reading list for the Comprehensive Examination, approved by all members of the supervisory committee, to the Graduate Studies Committee by April 28.

Spring: Annual Supervisory Committee Meeting (before June 30).

May-August: During the summer term candidates will meet once with each member of the comprehensive examination committee in preparation for the Comprehensive Examination.

### Year 2

During the fall term candidates will meet once with each member of the supervisory committee in preparation for the Comprehensive Examination.

Sept-Apr: Doctoral Research Seminar, meets bi-weekly.

Early Oct: SSHRC doctoral applications due on the [SSHRC On-Line System](#) for those who are applying.

February: Submission of the Comprehensive Examination Field Paper and Topic Paper by February 28th; oral defense within the next ten business days.

- Spring: Annual Supervisory Committee Meeting (before June 30).
- June 30: Detailed thesis proposal (2,000 words + bibliography) due to the Graduate Studies Committee.

### Year 3

Continued research and writing of thesis. During this time the candidate should submit the first draft of a portion of work to the supervisor, who will return the draft, with corrections, normally within **four weeks**. The corrected draft should then go to the other supervisory committee members, who return them with corrections normally within **four weeks**. If committee members do not adhere to this schedule, candidates are advised to inform the supervisor first and then, if necessary, the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee.

By the end of the first term of Year 3 the candidate should have submitted a draft of at least one substantial section of the thesis. SSHRC doctoral applications are due on the [SSHRC On-Line System](#) in late Sept/early Oct for those who are applying. The annual meeting of the entire supervisory committee should take place by the end of May.

### Year 4+

Continued research and writing of thesis. SSHRC doctoral applications are due on the [SSHRC On-Line System](#) in late Sept/early Oct for those who are applying, and SSHRC postdoctoral fellowship applications are normally due mid-September (students completing their dissertation this year should discuss applying for postdoctoral fellowships with their supervisor and/or the Graduate Chair). The annual meeting of the entire supervisory committee should take place by the end of May.

Candidates should take note of the School of Graduate Studies deadlines for submission of PhD theses approved for defense (usually around the end of June to be eligible for the November Convocation, and usually around the end of February to be eligible for the June Convocation) and for final, approved and defended PhD theses (usually around the end of September to be eligible for the November Convocation, and around the end of April to be eligible for the June Convocation). Please check the *exact* dates of submission in the current *School of Graduate Studies Calendar* since they will vary slightly from year to year. For more information regarding the [degree completion and the defense process](#), please see the School of Graduate Studies website via the link provided.

### **Part-time PhD Studies**

PhD studies require a major commitment in terms of time and energy. Therefore, the English and Cultural Studies Department strongly recommends that PhD applicants enroll as full-time students. The part-time PhD option should be chosen only in exceptional circumstances. Since the Department can accept only a very limited number of part-time PhD candidates at any one time, applicants will be required to provide a written explanation of the special circumstances that make it impracticable for them to pursue the degree on a full-time basis. *Also, please note*

*that the scheduling of graduate classes varies from year to year, and that they normally occur within the hours of 9:30am and 5:30 pm.*

*Schedule for part-time PhD candidates:*

- Years 1-3: Coursework
- Years 3-4: Comprehensive examinations
- Years 5-8: Thesis

## Appendix A: Grading Scale for Graduate Seminars

**A+** The work is of exceptional quality. It delineates a critical argument that would, with almost no revision, be worthy of publication, which is to say that it substantially contributes to the existing critical literature on the subject. It is written in not simply clear but eloquent language, and it displays a critical and theoretical maturity that would be expected of a professional scholar. It is painstakingly researched and takes its place confidently in its field. This grade is awarded for truly exceptional work.

**A** An excellent treatment of the subject. It delineates a critical argument that is substantial, perceptive, and that would, with some revision, potentially be worthy of publication. Its argument may include original insights, but its contribution to the field may not be fully delineated. It is written in clear, error-free language and shows some creativity in the use of that language. The work is very ably researched. There are no major problems with the argument.

**A-** A very good treatment of the subject that shows genuine insight. One of its elements, however, could use strengthening (however that element is defined—e.g., argumentation, clarity, precision, originality and value of thesis, depth of critical discussion, etc.). Signs of conscientious research are evident but may not be as skillfully handled in the student's presentation as they would be in an A paper.

**B+** A good, competent treatment of the subject, that lacks a compelling element (however that element is defined—e.g., a specific flaw in argumentation, clarity, precision, and value of thesis, depth of critical discussion, etc.). Writing may be less precise and there may be significant errors in grammar and editing. The level of argument may need improvement.

**B** An acceptable treatment of the subject, but one that may lack more than one compelling element. The work may be general and insufficiently analytical in nature, lacking in critical rigour. There are, however, good basic insights, but they need to be located within a consistent structure of argument. Language may be consistently imprecise. Research methods may be lacking.

**B-** A barely acceptable example of graduate work. Both critical argumentation and communication are weak and in need of substantial revision.

**C+** Work that is not acceptable at the graduate level. Critical argumentation and communication do not meet the standards of advanced study.

## Appendix B: Best Practices for PhD Supervisees and Supervisors

Please see the full [Supervision Guidelines for Faculty and Graduate Students](#) document provided by the School of Graduate Studies.

### Supervisors

- 1) The supervisor/advisor must be aware of the inherent power imbalance in the relationship with students, behave professionally, and communicate appropriately. They must provide a respectful environment that fosters productive scholarly work, curiosity, and freedom of expression. The environment must be free from harassment, discrimination, and intimidation.
- 2) The supervisor/advisor is expected to have sufficient time and resources (as appropriate for the field) to support the student's work effectively.
- 3) The supervisor/advisor should help the student develop a realistic thesis/research plan with reasonable plans, that balance exploration with achievable, manageable and focused goals, and allow completion of scholarly work "in time."
- 4) The supervisor/advisor should be aware that a student might experience changes in motivation and productivity. The supervisor/advisor should be prepared to adapt his/her mentorship approach to promote success in a range of different situations.
- 5) The supervisor/advisor is expected to be aware of accommodation policies, procedures and support services, and to support students with disabilities in designing and organizing accommodations. They are expected to be respectful of graduate students who are dealing with stressful situations and personal difficulties. When appropriate, the supervisor/advisor should direct the student to campus resources and other supports. The supervisor/advisor is responsible for promoting a culture of respect and collaboration and encouraging timely conflict resolution when disputes arise, which may require consultation with the supervisory committee or others (e.g., head of the graduate program).
- 6) The supervisor must regularly communicate and have face-to-face meetings with the student to provide feedback on the student's progress, strengths, weaknesses, gaps in knowledge, and how well the student is addressing deficiencies. Written summaries of feedback should be prepared when there are significant deficiencies. When a student is struggling with meeting graduate program/thesis work expectations, a supervisory committee meeting should be scheduled early to assess progress and plans, and to provide a clear statement of requirements to meet expectations.

- 7) The supervisor/advisor and supervisory committee are required to provide students with timely, but not instantaneous, feedback. As an example, corrections to a thesis chapter, major research project, or a manuscript optimally should occur within a few weeks. Faculty should be aware that they must respond to a draft of the thesis within the timelines outlined in the graduate calendar.
- 8) Supervisors/advisors who undertake a research leave or other leaves must communicate to their graduate students, and graduate student applicants, the plans to provide supervision during the leave. Supervisors/advisors who will be away from campus for extended periods of time must name an alternate faculty member, with graduate supervisory privileges, who will have day-to-day responsibility and signing-authority for students.
- 9) The supervisor/advisor is expected to encourage increasing independence as the student progresses through graduate work. Although the supervisor/advisor is not expected to be a copy editor for the student's written work, they should review and provide feedback on materials that the student produces prior to external review or defence.
- 10) Students' contributions to research must be acknowledged in accordance with the University policies and the norms of the academic discipline.
- 11) When feasible and appropriate, supervisors/advisors are expected to encourage students to submit their graduate work for presentation at conferences and workshops, and for publication.
- 12) The supervisor/advisor should recognize that there are multiple career paths available to different students and should be respectful of the student's choice of career path, providing advice, where appropriate, on the best way for the student to reach his/her career goals. The supervisor also should be aware of professional development opportunities for the student offered through the Department/Program, Faculty, or University, and should encourage the student to take advantage of such opportunities.
- 13) It is the supervisor/advisor's responsibility to be aware of all the requirements, regulations and guidelines outlined in the Graduate Calendar and University policies.

## Students

- 1) Commitment to scholarly activity is a pre-requisite for graduate success.
- 2) To support mentorship and guidance, the student must engage in effective, timely and on-going communication with the supervisor/advisor regarding the status of their project.
- 3) The student should discuss expectations with the supervisor/advisor to ensure that there is a mutual understanding of research goals and related activities, coursework, timelines, and deadlines.
- 4) The student must manage their time, meet deadlines, and prepare for regularly scheduled meetings (e.g., with the supervisor/advisor and supervisory committee). Students should recognize that graduate program academic expectations will not be modified if they choose to engage in other activities, such as working outside of their graduate studies, or engaging in supplementary scholarly activities (e.g., conference or workshop attendance). Student-supervisor meetings for thesis work typically occur at least monthly, although meeting regularity will vary amongst disciplines and at various stages. Students are encouraged to discuss concerns about the type and amount of supervision needed for their work with their supervisor. Students are expected to inform the academic head of the graduate program if they are concerned about inadequate or inappropriate supervision.
- 5) The student is expected to develop effective communication and collaborative skills and to demonstrate respect for others. The student should carefully consider advice, suggestions, comments, and criticisms received from the graduate supervisor/advisor. The student should expect timely, but not immediate, responses (regarding meetings, feedback on written work, etc.) from the supervisor/advisor and supervisory committee.
- 6) The student is obliged to act ethically in conducting graduate work. This includes, but is not limited to, following McMaster University policies on the ethical conduct of research and academic integrity. The student is required to document and honestly report research data, to conscientiously cite information and data sources, and to seek guidance on any data exclusions.
- 7) It is the student's responsibility to be aware of all the requirements, regulations, and guidelines, outlined in the Graduate Calendar as well as all University policies pertaining to graduate work.

## **Appendix C: Student Accessibility Services**

McMaster is committed to the accommodation of students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of The Ontario Human Rights Code. Students who require academic accommodation are encouraged to contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) as early as possible in their program to put in place the supports they need. Please also see the university's [policy on academic accommodation](#).

## **Appendix D: Additional Policies, Regulations, and Resources**

### **Policies and Regulations**

Please see the [University Secretariat website](#) (for information pertaining to graduate students specifically, please use the search engine on this site).

### **Academic Integrity**

This Policy governs academic behaviour of graduate students and faculty and the handling of matters pertaining to academic dishonesty.

### **Graduate Course Management Policy**

This policy summarizes instructor responsibilities regarding graduate courses.

### **Conflict of Interest Guidelines: Undergraduate and Graduate Studies**

This policy describes the responsibility of McMaster University faculty pertaining to conflict of interest in graduate student evaluations and relationships with graduate students.

### **Discrimination, Harassment & Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy**

### **Sexual Violence Response Protocol**

This website is a place where students can find support and information about sexual, intimate partnership or family violence including rape. It is also a place where campus members can find tips on how to provide the best support possible to survivors who disclose sexual, intimate partnership or family violence.

### **Policy on Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous, and Spiritual Observances**

McMaster University strives to be welcoming and inclusive of all its members and respectful of their differences. The University recognizes that, on occasion, the timing of a student's religious, Indigenous, or spiritual observances and that of their academic obligations may conflict. In such cases, the University will provide reasonable academic accommodation for students that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code, through respectful, accessible, and fair processes.

### **Intellectual Property: Ownership of Student Work**

### **Research Integrity Policy**

The McMaster University policies on research conduct that apply to both faculty and learners are described in this policy.



**[McMaster Research Ethics Board \(MREB\)](#)**

This policy governs the practice and promotion of ethical research for McMaster University.

**[Copyright Office](#)**

**[Leaves of Absence](#)**

2.5.7 in the Graduate calendar

**[Petition for Special Consideration](#)**

**[Incomplete/Failing Grade](#)**

2.6.10 in the Graduate calendar

**[Student Code of Conduct](#)**

McMaster is a community dedicated to providing a safe and secure environment in which all community members conduct themselves in a manner that respects community members' rights, upholds their responsibilities as a member of the community and promotes the educational goals of the University.

**[Student Appeal Procedure](#)**

This document outlines the procedures for the lodging and hearing of student complaints arising out of McMaster University regulations, policies and actions that affect students directly.