

PhD in Environmental Studies

Learning Objectives of the Program:

1. To foster a research environment focused on complex socio-ecological issues and sustainable approaches to addressing environmental issues.
2. To train students to critically evaluate the broader implications of applying knowledge they generate to address socio-ecological issues related to the environment.
3. To engage students by facilitating advanced research opportunities that require intellectual curiosity and independence.
4. To develop students' communication skills to enable them to communicate complex ideas, issues and conclusions clearly and efficiently in a variety of forums – academic, political, mass media.

Anticipated Learning Outcomes Include:

1. Students graduating from the PhD program will have depth and breadth of knowledge in environmental studies and the field of sustainability, which will support the student's future academic activities or professional practice with government, private or civil society sectors.
2. Through research and scholarship in sustainability, graduates will understand the requirements needed to conceptualize, design and produce original research or advanced scholarship, or artistic and other creative products that can satisfy peer review and publication in both academic and popular media. Graduates will be capable of critically examining and potentially extending a variety of methods through their research. Graduates may have chosen to explore and extend emerging integrative research approaches based on systems thinking such as resilience, sustainability assessment, and social innovation.
3. Through the application of knowledge, graduates will have built on their science/social backgrounds and will have incorporated methods from a variety of disciplines (politics, sociology, geography etc.) to ensure their results are meaningful to society and contribute to solutions to the environmental challenges we face.
4. Graduates will be capable of communicating their research findings in a variety of public forums.
5. Graduates will consistently demonstrate responsibility, integrity and intellectual independence as measured through their course work, their independent research and participation in the seminar series.
6. Graduates will be able to demonstrate the limits of their own knowledge generation through understanding the assumptions upon which their research is based and accepting that there are always different ways of understanding based on the perspectives we bring to research. A clear example of this issue involves research in Canada's north (an area of increasing interest among our faculty). Graduates will understand that their research, if based on western science, may be viewed by First Nation and aboriginal groups with skepticism, as these communities rely on a different knowledge system based on oral and traditional knowledge.

The objectives will be achieved by a combination of courses, independent research, seminars, readings, a comprehensive examination and a thesis.

Courses:

All PhD students are required to successfully complete three graduate courses. The normal course requirements are: ENSC 801 Environmental Studies Methods, and ENSC 802 Global Environmental Problems, to be taken during the first year of studies and one other relevant graduate level course. These course requirements must be fulfilled before the student can submit their approved research proposal and proceed to the Comprehensive Exam.

Students who have already taken ENSC 801 and ENSC 802 during an School of Environmental Studies (SES) Master of Environmental Studies (MES) program at Queen's will be exempted from taking these courses but must take one elective graduate course selected in consultation with their supervisor. In the event that courses similar to ENSC 801 and/or ENSC 802 have been successfully completed previously at another University within the past 5 years, a student may apply to the SES Graduate Committee for an exemption to ENSC 802 but not ENSC 801. (Work experience is not grounds for exemption.) ENSC 801 includes critical work on the student's own new thesis project and is also important to build cohort collegiality. Applications for an exemption to ENSC 802 should be submitted no later than November 30 in the term before the ENSC 802 iteration in question. The applicant must have the written support of their supervisor and provide evidence of their past course content, including detailed course syllabi to the Graduate Committee. The student may also request to speak to the committee in person and for their supervisor to be present at that meeting to make their case. The committee's decision, and the rationale for this decision, will be communicated to the student within 3 working days of that meeting. In the event that an exemption is granted, no substitute course is required. The required third, elective course is not eligible for exemption or substitution from previous studies.

Seminars:

The SES has a weekly seminar series covering a diverse range of environmental issues, with speakers from the humanities, social sciences, health sciences, and natural sciences. PhD students are strongly encouraged to attend these seminars and present in this series once during their program, ideally towards the end of their PhD in preparation for their PhD oral examination. This presentation is in addition to the annual presentations made by students during the School's annual Research Day (see Section 5.2)

Doctoral thesis:

Students will conduct doctoral research resulting in their dissertation. Topics of research will be similar to those of our Masters students in the MES program but will be of greater depth, innovation and originality (e.g. environment and health, urban sustainability, tourism, northern development, environmental justice, aboriginal studies, agriculture).