

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

PhD REQUIREMENTS AND REGULATIONS

The following statement applies to all candidates entering the PhD program in Geography and Planning. It is consistent with the [General Regulations](#) for Graduate Study, which appear in the [Calendar](#) of the School of Graduate Studies, and should be read in conjunction with those guidelines.

A THE PhD DEGREE PROGRAM IN GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

1 Status and Time Limits

Effective for students admitted Sept. 1, 2021 and all subsequent years:

While the doctoral program is designed and approved to be completed within four years (12 terms) of initial full-time registration there are many reasons why additional time may be required. This regulation describes the [standard timeframe for program completion](#) (scroll and click on Time Limits for Completion of Programs) and the process for [extending the timeframe](#) (scroll and click on Extension of Time Limits).

Effective for students admitted prior to September 1, 2021:

The requirements for doctoral programs must be completed within seven years from the time of initial registration in the department/program. It should be noted that these specified periods are time LIMITS and are not indicative of normal program duration.

Normally, students are expected to register as full-time and to be on-campus throughout their doctoral programs. Students who are not on campus on a full-time basis must have approval of both the Department and the Graduate School to register as full-time off-campus (see the Graduate School regulations for part-time and off-campus status).

2 Annual Status Reports

All candidates shall submit an [annual written report](#) (scroll and click on Annual Report Form) outlining stage of development, courses and examinations completed, a statement on field research, and a list of scholarly outputs. The Graduate Coordinator may, on the basis of that report, call a meeting with the candidate, the supervisor(s), and the Head of the Department if deemed necessary.

3 Supervisory Committee

In addition, the thesis supervisory committee should be established and hold its initial meeting in Year One, and a candidate will normally meet at least once a year with the supervisory committee (see Section D4 below) or provide a one-page report to the committee. Timing of these meetings along with any recommendations will be documented on the annual report. The supervisor shall submit a brief written report on the annual meeting, to be placed in the candidate's file.

4 Requirements

The doctoral program in geography consists of course work, a qualifying examination, a thesis, and where appropriate, a language requirement.

B COURSE WORK

1 Purpose of Course Work

Course work is intended to help the candidate to become acquainted with significant components of the discipline, and to prepare her or him to undertake original research in the area chosen for a thesis. The opportunity for contact with a number of faculty in the Department and elsewhere in the University is likewise important.

2 Course Work Requirement

Doctoral candidates are required to take GPHY-801* (Conceptual and Methodological Basis of Geography, which is a mandatory seminar in which a preliminary thesis proposal is developed) and a minimum of two additional graduate term-length courses beyond the Master's degree. One of these courses may be taken outside the Department of Geography, with approval of the Supervisor and Graduate Coordinator. With the exception of GPHY-801*, a candidate should take no more than one course with her or his supervisor and this should normally not be a directed reading course. After reviewing a candidate's academic preparation and research aspirations, an incoming candidate may be required by his or her supervisor, in consultation with the Associate Head (Graduate Studies), to complete more courses than the minimum specified.

C LANGUAGE

The Associate Head (Graduate Programs), in consultation with the candidate's supervisor, will require the candidate to gain competence in a language other than English if it is judged to be pertinent to a candidate's program. Normally, a decision on whether the candidate must satisfy a language requirement will be made no later than the beginning of the second term of full-time registration in the PhD program.

D QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

1 Purpose of the Qualifying Examination

The overall purpose of the qualifying examination is to evaluate a candidate's suitability for continuing in the doctoral program. It is normally taken after all course work has been completed and before the beginning of substantive fieldwork. In some circumstances, it may be taken before all the courses have been completed. The examination is normally held in the fourth term of a candidate's program (fall term of the second year). Candidates who have not successfully completed the qualifying examination by the end of the sixth term (summer of second year) will be asked to withdraw from the doctoral program subject to appeal to a committee to consist of the head of the department or the head's delegate, the graduate coordinator, and one additional tenured faculty member other than the faculty member(s) supervising the graduate student.

The basis of the evaluation is two-fold: first it concerns the major ideas of the research proposal (see below) defining the topic the candidate proposes for a thesis; second, it considers domains of reading that address the broader philosophical, methodological and substantive issues that define the intellectual content and context of the candidate's research activities. A candidate will identify three domains of reading for their proposal. It is not assumed that the candidate will have fully developed these elements, but rather that he or she has sufficient background to *continue* his or her development through the completion of a thesis. The qualifying examination should aid in the identification of weaknesses that need to be remedied, provide the candidate with the opportunity to organize material in a wider context than is normally available in an individual graduate course, and aid the examining committee in forming an overall opinion with respect to suitability of the candidate to continue in the program by beginning research toward the thesis.

2 Preparation for the Qualifying Examination (also see Appendix A)

The basis of the Qualifying Examination is (i) an examination of a Research Proposal prepared by the candidate; and (ii) the assessment of a written response and oral defense of two questions from the committee that relate to the domains of reading.

Preparation for the examination should include the following steps:

- a. The formation of a **Supervisory Committee** comprising:
 - the supervisor
 - at least one internal examiner from the departmentan internal-external examiner (a faculty member from another Department, but may be cross-appointed with Geography and Planning; the examiner should be at arm's length to the candidate's research, e.g., not a collaborator on the candidate's research)

Additional internal or internal-external examiners may be added as required; similarly Elders or community members with specialized knowledge may be added as non-voting members as required.

Please note that the composition of the examining committee may be altered between the Qualifying Exam stage and the Final Oral Exam stage, with approval of the Associate Head (Graduate Studies) and/or Head of Department.

The **Qualifying Examination Committee** normally consists of the **Supervisory Committee** plus a **Chair** (appointed by the Head and a non-voting member) and the **Head or Head's delegate** (see section 4 for the roles and responsibilities of the committee members). The Qualifying Examination Committee should be formed by the end of the second term in the program. It is desirable that wherever possible the members of the Qualifying Examination Committee should also serve on the candidate's final thesis committee, but committee membership may be revisited after the Qualifying examination. Only under exceptional circumstances may any examiner be from outside the University. An examiner from outside the University who serves on the committee should under no circumstances serve as the external examiner of the final thesis.

- b. A first meeting of the candidate and the Qualifying Examination Committee should be convened by the end of the second term, and no later than early in the fourth term of the candidate's program. The purpose of the meeting is to: (i) allow the candidate to get early advice on the direction of his or her research from the committee; and (ii) help establish the domains of background reading for which she or he is responsible in the area in which the proposal will be presented. In preparation for this meeting, the candidate should circulate to the Committee members a first draft of the Research Proposal, to be considered a working document. The first meeting is not meant to be an examination of this document, but rather a discussion formed around it. Candidates are encouraged to seek the advice of individual members of the committee both before and after this preliminary meeting. Based on the discussions, it is possible the Committee will decide that a second meeting is required prior to the Qualifying Exam being scheduled. At the conclusion of the first (or second) meeting, the committee will discuss potential questions to be posed to the candidate upon submission of the final proposal for the Qualifying Exam. These will be drafted by the supervisor and approved by the committee prior to the submission of the final research proposal by the candidate.
- c. The final Research Proposal should normally be submitted no later than the last day of the fourth term in the program (usually December of the second year). It is in the interest of many candidates to submit a proposal earlier so that it can be used as a basis for submissions for scholarships or other funding with deadlines in the fall term. The Qualifying Exam may be scheduled no earlier than four weeks after the final Research Proposal is submitted to the committee.
- d. Upon submission of the final Research Proposal, the Chair will provide **three** questions, one for each domain of reading to the candidate, from which the candidate will answer **two**. **The candidate will have two weeks to complete the questions.** Answer(s) to each of the written questions should not exceed 2,000 words, excluding the bibliography, abstract, figures and tables.

- e. As soon as possible after the submission of the Research Proposal and responses to the questions, the examining committee will submit written evaluations to the Chair of the Qualifying Examination Committee. Unless two or more of the written evaluations indicate the Qualifying Examination should not be held, the candidate will proceed to examination (See section D.3, the Qualifying Examination).
- f. In those cases where two of the written evaluations of the Research Proposal have been negative, a second meeting will be held with the candidate and the Qualifying Examination Committee prior to the Qualifying Examination. The purpose of the meeting will be: (i) to allow the committee members to consult as a group on the quality of the Research Proposal; (ii) to indicate to the candidate any problems or revisions to the proposal which are necessary before the Qualifying Examination can take place; (iii) discuss the suitability of the responses to the questions; and (iv) to set a date for the Qualifying Examination.

3 The Qualifying Examination

- a. The examination will be approximately two hours duration and no more than three hours. At the beginning of the examination, the candidate will withdraw while the Chair reads out the reports from the Committee members which may lead to brief discussion. The candidate will then be invited back into the examination. At this time, the candidate may choose to give a brief presentation of their research or go directly into the questions, usually two rounds of questions from committee members. The examination should focus on both the substance of the proposal, submitted responses to the questions and the specified domains of background reading. The decision of the Committee should be based on the quality of the proposal, the candidate's written responses and oral performance in the examination. At the conclusion of the examination, the candidate will withdraw while the committee reaches its decision.
- b. The qualifying examination includes both a written and an oral component. In addition to defending their research proposal, the examination will also involve the student preparing (and defending) answers to two questions based on two of their domains of reading. In the oral component of the examination, which should not exceed three hours, the candidate defends the written documents. With the approval of the Associate Head of the Graduate Committee, alternative formats for the qualifying examination process may be permitted (i.e., for specific accommodations or formats), provided they meet the objectives of the qualifying examination.
- c. It should be noted that the Research Proposal, as examined, is an indication of the stage of development of the thinking of the candidate in a given research area. It is not absolutely binding on subsequent work. Clearly, as research progresses, ideas can change, and emphases shift. In exceptional circumstances, a major departure from the examined proposal may be permitted. Any such departure must be detailed in a written statement to the head and be approved by the Committee members.
- d. The possible outcomes of the examination are as follows:
 - i. **Pass:** allowed to continue.
 - ii. **Provisional Pass:** these may include the following: recommended revisions to the proposal; additional reading or coursework; TAing a course; written responses to the questions related to the domains of reading. Revised proposals, and/or responses to questions related to the domains, must be submitted to the Supervisor and/or Committee members who should individually certify to the Chair that the agreed revisions have been satisfactorily completed. The members responsible for approval of the revisions will be determined at the qualifying exam.
 - iii. **Fail:** after one failure, the candidate is permitted to re-sit the Qualifying Examination once within six months. A second failure or the passage of six months without re-examination requires withdrawal from the programme. The decision of the Committee is by simple majority. A split decision constitutes a failure. Candidates wishing to appeal the decision of the Committee after a second failure may consult the Graduate School Calendar (Section 8.9(c)) for details of the procedure.
- e. The chair will inform the candidate of the decision of the Committee at the conclusion of the examination.

4 Responsibilities of the Qualifying Examination Committee

The members of the committee shall normally be responsible for:

- a. Participating in a first meeting described under D.2.b above.
- b. Preparing, no later than three days prior to the Qualifying Exam, a short, written report on the Proposal and written answers to the Committee's questions to be submitted to the chair of the committee. The report should comment on the substance of the proposal and written answers and indicate whether, in the opinion of the examiner, the candidate can go forward to oral examination. Any recommendations for revisions to the Proposal, additional domains, literature, or extra work to be completed before an examination may be held, *must* be detailed in the written report.
- c. *If necessary*, participating in a second meeting described under D.2.f above. The committee chair (in the absence of the candidate) will first read out the written reports. The committee should then reach agreement on what specific changes or additional work a candidate must undertake before proceeding. These will then be discussed with the candidate and confirmed in a memorandum prepared by the chair and circulated to the candidate and members of the committee. A resubmitted proposal and/or written answers must normally be orally examined within one month of resubmission.
- d. Attending and participating in the oral qualifying examination in person (see D.3 above). Under exceptional circumstances, an examiner, may be permitted to submit a list of questions that will be posed by the chair on her or his behalf.
- e. In all meetings with the candidate, the chair will act as an impartial arbiter and ensure that the candidate is treated fairly at all times. The chair is a non-voting member of the Committee. The chair will also be responsible for preparing a written report summarizing the content of the examination and setting out (in the case of D.3.b.ii or D.3.b.iii above) the detailed recommendations of the Committee. This report will be circulated to the other members of the Committee for comment and then given to the candidate and placed in his or her file in the Department. A copy of the final approved proposal should be placed in the candidate's file.

E THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The following section incorporates and adapts material from Queen's University Research Services: Best Practices for Discovery Grants. <https://www.queensu.ca/vpr/funding/external/nserc/discovery-grant>

The following are *guidelines* for the preparation of the research proposal. Although it is recognized that each proposal is developed for a unique problem and context, every effort should be made to include the components identified below.

The Research Proposal is a critical document in the progress to the PhD. It will be used to assess whether a candidate is sufficiently prepared to continue with his or her thesis research. Your proposal should convey **enthusiasm and excitement**; this is often contagious, and you want your reviewers to be excited about your proposal. Proposals are not research papers; they are a form of "persuasive writing" rather than just objective accounts.

The following characteristics would apply to an outstanding research proposal:

- is clearly presented, **highly original and innovative**;
- is likely to have impact by contributing to ground-breaking advances in the area and/or **leading to a technology or policy** that addresses socio-economic or environmental needs;
- **has long-term goals that are clearly defined and short-term objectives that are well planned**;
- has a **clearly described and appropriate methodology**.
- has a budget that **clearly demonstrates** how the research activities will be supported.

Formatting Guidelines

The format of the proposal is meant to mimic NSERC Discovery, SSHRC Insight and CIHR Project Grant guidelines. Prepare the research proposal (Abstract, Detailed Description, Budget and Budget Justification, References) as per the following guidelines:

- Acronyms / abbreviations must be spelled out completely on initial appearance in text;
- Pages must be 8 ½" x 11" (216mm x 279mm);
- Pages must be single-spaced, with no more than six lines of type per inch;
- All text must be in 12 pt. Times New Roman font;
- Condensed fonts will not be accepted;
- Colour imagery is acceptable* but the text should be in black;
- All margins must be set at a minimum of ¾" (1.87 cm);
- Do not introduce hyperlinks in your documents.

The proposal should contain the following sections (see page limits for each section below):

1 TITLE

The title should describe the subject of the research to be supported. Keep it clear and simple and avoid acronyms or company or trade names.

2 ABSTRACT (maximum one page)

Write the abstract in a manner that will assist the non-experts tremendously in understanding the gist of the proposal. Set the stage, get experts and non-experts alike excited about reading the rest of the proposal. Briefly describe: (i) the nature of the work and why the research is important; (ii) for whom the research is important; (iii) anticipated research outcomes; and how your field will benefit.

3 DETAILED DESCRIPTION (maximum six pages)

Introduction (~1 page)

Start with a **brief introduction** to motivate the proposed work, to explain the bigger picture and why the research is important.

Literature Review / Theoretical Approach and Conceptual Framework (~2 pages)

This section establishes the intellectual context within which the research is being undertaken and outlines the theories and or debates shaping how you understand and plan your research. This might include a discussion of theories, constructs, variables or propositions used to explain the issue you want to study and the specific research question or questions (or hypotheses) arising from these models or theories that will form the focus of your research. It should identify the key research items, citing both the major theoretical and empirical contributions that identify the starting point of the proposed research and that justify the intellectual decisions regarding the choice of research problem and method. It is not a comprehensive literature review, which would normally be an integral part of the research endeavour itself. All references cited in this section should be listed in footnotes, endnotes, or a reference section.

Research Question(s) (~½ page)

The specific research questions, objectives, or hypotheses that serve as the focus of the research.

Impact (~½ page)

Explain the anticipated significance of the work, with a particular emphasis on impact on your field of research. Take the time to carefully and convincingly explain and justify the expected impact of the proposed work on your field.

- What is original and innovative about the work? Will this research be of interest to other areas of research/disciplines? Who will use its results? What will it mean to the state-of-the-art in the field? Will it be of interest outside the academic community? How will it be used and by whom?
- Committees will not assume proposed work is original or significant unless they are told why it is original or significant.

Methodology (~2 pages)

In this section, candidates should explain how they will answer the research questions laid out in the preceding section. It is essential that the linkages between the research questions and the research methods proposed to answer those questions be clearly delineated. Provide enough methodological detail to allow the committee to determine the merit of the proposed work. Use well-constructed diagrams and figures if they will provide more clarity and are more efficient in conveying information than the same amount of text would. Although it is recognized that subsequent experience may require changes in the methodology, it is essential that the candidate make every effort to set out the proposed procedures and their justification in as much detail as is possible.

4 REFERENCES (maximum two pages)

5 BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (1 page)

Provide a budget for your proposed research. Include a justification section in this section that describes the necessary expenditures. Include the resources that are needed to accomplish the proposed research. **This should be completed in consultation with your supervisor.** Care should be taken to spell out requirements in the following areas:

- travel (airfares, accommodations, subsistence);
- salaries for field assistants;
- equipment purchases;
- costs of tests, sample processing, and other processing costs;
- survey needs (interviewers, travel, telephone, supplies, coding);

The resources currently available to the candidate from external agencies, from committed allocations from the supervisor and/or from the department or university should be specified.

6 TIMETABLE (maximum one page)

A timetable of research activities should be spelled out in as much detail as possible. Together with the discussions of methodology and resources, it will help in the assessment of the feasibility of the research.

ETHICS REVIEW

Candidates whose research involves human subjects must successfully complete the compulsory Human Research Ethics approval – CORE (SGS 804) online tutorial prior to their thesis proposal qualifying examination. They must also provide a full draft of a General Research Ethics Board (GREB) application in the proposal. Candidates and their supervisor can decide whether to submit this application to GREB prior to, or immediately following the qualifying exam. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.queensu.ca/urs/ethics/general-research-ethics-board-greb>

DOMAINS OF BACKGROUND READING

This document should be appended at the end of the proposal and should delineate three domains of background reading for which the candidate is responsible in the oral examination.

This section should contain:

- a. a short (1–2 paragraph) statement identifying the domains, providing a brief rationale for their themes and extent in light of the proposed research.
- b. an extended bibliography of the references that constitute the domains. These may be subdivided by theme or between theoretical, substantive, and methodological sources, as appropriate. Past experience suggests that a bibliography of between 50–100 books and/or articles would be more than sufficient to define the domains. Care should be taken to ensure that all references are cited in a complete and consistent manner according to the stylistic conventions of any major disciplinary journal.

F THE PhD THESIS IN GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

PhD students in the Geography and Planning Department have the option of writing a traditional thesis or a manuscript thesis.

- 1 Scope:** The PhD thesis is the major requirement of the program. It must comprise a coherent and unified research project in the case of a traditional thesis or a series of logically related research papers in the case of a manuscript thesis. It must be well written and display a scholarly understanding of the subject. And it must include a (or several) review(s) of previous work related to the original research conducted and a concluding summation of the thesis' contribution to the subject.
- 2 Length:** While there is no set length to a Ph.D. thesis in geography, past practice would suggest that most theses range between 150 and 300 pages of text; with traditional theses often approaching the upward boundary and manuscript theses more likely to be near the lower boundary. Manuscript theses also require that there be a minimum of three manuscripts in addition to the introduction, literature review (optional at discretion of supervisor in consultation with the student) and conclusions.
- 3 Original Research:** A thesis must involve the collection, analysis and interpretation of primary material from field, laboratory, theoretical, or archival research. The expectation is that the thesis makes an original contribution to geographic knowledge.
- 4 Form:** Please see "[General Form of Theses](#)" available at the School of Graduate Studies.

The following are other requirements for the manuscript thesis option:

Expectations: The intellectual effort behind the manuscripts must be dominated by the student. Students will normally hold first authorship on the manuscripts that constitute the thesis. When there is multiple authorship, the thesis must include an authorship statement outlining the role of all authors and specifying the contributions of the thesis author. When work from a previously published or in-press manuscript is included in the thesis, a waiver from the copyright holders is normally required and should be included in an appendix.

Publication: The manuscripts may be ready for submission, submitted, in press, or published. Manuscripts will typically be peer-reviewed journal articles, but other formats, such as book chapters, may be appropriate as negotiated with the supervisor and committee.

References: There are two options for presenting references. 1) References can be consolidated at the end of the thesis or 2) References can be included at the end of each chapter. Formatting must be consistent with the School of Graduate Studies guidelines.

G THE PhD THESIS DEFENSE

The regulations for the PhD thesis format, exam protocols, and final thesis submission are set by the School of Graduate Studies <https://www.queensu.ca/sgs/current-students/degree-completion>

Appendix A

Timeline for Qualifying Exam

