

# QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

## DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

### MA and MSc

## REQUIREMENTS AND REGULATIONS

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

## A THE MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM IN GEOGRAPHY

### 1 Status and Time Limits

Effective for students admitted September 1, 2013 and all subsequent years: While the Master's program is designed and approved to be completed in two years (6 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 down to "Time Limits for Completion of Programs") and the process for [extending the timeframe](#) (scroll down to "Extension of Time Limits").

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

### 2 Annual Reports

All candidates shall submit an annual written report outlining status of thesis development, courses and examinations completed, a statement on field research, and a copy of their curriculum vitae. The Graduate Chair may, based on 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 their committee (see Section 4 below). The supervisor shall submit a brief written report on the annual meeting, to be placed in the candidate's file.

## **4 Requirements**

The Master's program in Geography consists of course work and a thesis. Students have the option of writing a full thesis or a half thesis. In order to meet the requirements for a Master's degree, students writing a half thesis must complete six (6) 3.0 unit courses; those writing a full thesis must complete four (4) 3.0 unit courses. A full thesis which fails at defense may not be reworked as a half thesis. The half-thesis option can be completed in three terms (one year). Students may have the option to convert to a full thesis, but they have to apply during the second term of their program (by February 15).

## **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 them to undertake 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**

Master's candidates in Human Geography completing a half thesis are required to take GPHY-857\* (Geography Research Seminar – in which a preliminary Half-thesis proposal is developed), GPHY 868 (Geographic Thought and Practice) and a minimum of five graduate 3.0-unit term-length courses. Students completing the half-thesis program will be allowed to take two courses outside of the department. After reviewing a candidate's academic preparation and research aspirations, an incoming candidate may be required by their supervisor, in consultation with the Graduate Chair, to complete more courses than the minimum specified.

Master's candidates in Human Geography completing a full thesis are required to take GPHY-857\* (Geography Research Seminar – in which a preliminary thesis proposal is developed), GPHY 868 (Geographic Thought and Practice) and a minimum of three graduate term-length courses. After reviewing a candidate's academic preparation and research aspirations, an incoming candidate may be required by their supervisor, in consultation with the Graduate Chair, to complete more courses than the minimum specified.

Master's candidates in Physical Geography completing a half thesis are required to take GPHY-857\* (Geography Research Seminar – in which a preliminary Half-thesis proposal is developed) and a minimum of six graduate 3.0-unit term-length courses. Students completing the half-thesis program will be allowed to take two courses outside of the department. After reviewing a candidate's academic preparation and research aspirations, an incoming candidate may be required by their supervisor, in consultation with the Graduate Chair, to complete more courses than the

minimum specified.

Master's candidates in Physical Geography completing a full thesis are required to take GPHY-857\* (Geography Research Seminar – in which a preliminary thesis proposal is developed), and a minimum of four graduate term-length courses. After reviewing a candidate's academic preparation and research aspirations, an incoming candidate may be required by their supervisor, in consultation with the Graduate Chair, to complete more courses than the minimum specified.

## C THE FULL THESIS (MA AND MSc) IN GEOGRAPHY

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

### 1 Scope

The Master's thesis is a major requirement of our program. It must comprise a coherent and unified research project. It must be focused upon a theme, thesis, or research question. It must be well written and display a scholarly understanding of the subject. It must include a review of previous work related to the research project and a concluding summation of the thesis' contribution to the subject.

### 2 Length

The suggested length of a full thesis is no more than 200 pages of text. Manuscript theses require a minimum of one manuscript in addition to the introduction, literature review (optional at discretion of supervisor in consultation with the student), and conclusions.

### 3 Original Research

A full thesis must involve the collection, analysis and interpretation of primary material from field, laboratory, theoretical, or archival research.

### 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 manuscript(s) must be dominated by the student. Students will normally hold first authorship on the manuscript(s) 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 manuscript(s) may be ready for submission, submitted, in press, or published. Manuscript(s) 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 SGSPA guidelines.

## **D THE HALF THESIS (MA AND MSc) IN GEOGRAPHY**

### **1 The half thesis may take four possible forms:**

- i. **Research Proposal:** A half thesis may be a research proposal which:
  - (a) identifies a significant research problem,
  - (b) provides a critical review of the literature relevant to it, and
  - (c) documents comprehensively a research design that could be applied to address it.
- ii. **Replication or Revisitation of an Existing Study:** This half thesis would involve the implementation of the theory, method and techniques of the existing study in a different spatial or temporal framework. The main object of the thesis would be comparison with the earlier study.
- iii. **Small-Scale or Pilot Study:** This half thesis option involves the aspects of identification, execution, analysis, and reporting of the full thesis, except that the research problem undertaken is one of significantly less scope than would normally be acceptable for a full thesis.
- iv. **Literature Review:** This half thesis may be a critical review and/or synthesis of substantive bodies of literature relating to a particular topic. The review would be broader in scope than that contemplated in the research proposal option (see 1(b) above) and would be directed to providing new insight into, or understanding of, the topic.

### **2 Length**

The suggested length of a half thesis is no more than 100 pages of text. It is, however, primarily the scope, and originality of research, analysis and interpretation that distinguishes the half thesis from the full thesis.

### **3 Defence**

Note that a defense is required of students completing a half-thesis, as per instructions in Section "E" below.

## **E PROCEDURES REGARDING THE CONVENING, MEMBERSHIP, AND PROCESSING OF MASTER'S ORAL THESIS EXAMINATIONS**

1. The supervisor, in consultation with the Head of the Department, shall nominate members for the Master's Oral Thesis Examining Committee, and propose a date, time, and place for the examination. The supervisor must obtain commitments to serve as examiners, at the suggested time, from those they nominate. The departmental form is completed and signed by the supervisor and the Head of the Department.
2. The examination committee for the full thesis shall comprise at least the following members:
  - Chair of the committee (Head of the Department or Head's delegate, non-voting); Supervisor(s);
  - At least one other faculty member from the department; and/or
  - At least one other faculty member from outside the department.
3. The examination committee for the half thesis shall comprise at least the following members:
  - Chair of the committee (Head of the Department or Head's delegate, non-voting); Supervisor(s);
  - At least one other faculty member from the department OR from outside the department.
4. The completed, signed departmental form to schedule a Master's Oral Thesis Examination will be delivered to the Graduate Programs Coordinator by the supervisor no later than ten (10) working days prior to the scheduled date of the examination.
5. The candidate will deliver a copy of the thesis to each member of the examining committee no later than 10 working days prior to the scheduled date of the examination.
6. The Graduate Programs Coordinator will:
  - i. check that the course work requirements for the degree have been met, and so indicate on the form;
  - ii. send a copy of the departmental form to the SGSPA Thesis Coordinator;
  - iii. confirm the date, time, and place of the examination to the candidate and all members of the committee;

- iv. provide each member of the examination committee with a Confidential pre-exam report.
7. The decision of each examiner as to whether the examination is to proceed must be received by the Graduate Programs Coordinator no later than three (3) working days before the examination. In the case of a positive decision, the written report on the thesis may be submitted at any time up to the commencement of the examination. In the case of a negative decision, the written report must accompany the decision form, and should indicate why the thesis should not proceed to examination.
8. If two (2) or more negative reports are received no later than three (3) working days prior to the examination, they will be forwarded to the Chair of the Examining Committee and to the supervisor who, in consultation with the candidate, will decide whether the examination is to proceed. If the candidate agrees that the oral exam be postponed, the Chair, in consultation with the supervisor, must convey to the candidate the nature of the revisions that are advised. These revisions must be completed before the examination can be rescheduled.
9. After the oral thesis examination, the Chair of the Examining Committee will ask for comments from the Examination Committee on the conduct of the examination (a standard form will be provided) and will provide a report to the Head of the Department or Graduate Chair and to the SGSPA. The result of the examination, copyright forms, and reports, are forwarded by the Graduate Programs Coordinator to the SGSPA Thesis Coordinator.

## F TRANSFER FROM MA/MSC TO PHD

### 1 Rationale

Students registered in the MA or MSc program who show exceptional promise in their research and have first class standing may apply for transfer to the PhD program without completing their Master's thesis. This procedure is in place to rapidly advance qualified students to the doctoral program. The student will be required to complete a minimum of four courses **combined** (plus GPHY 857/801) from the Masters and PhD program. If a student has completed GPHY 857 (required for Master's program), and the scope of research is not changing significantly with promotion, required enrollment in GPHY 801 in the PhD program MAY be waived.

There are both pros and cons to transferring to the PhD – these should be discussed thoroughly with the Supervisor. Promotion can be risky, as it is difficult to revert back to a Master's program if the PhD program is not successful (see Notes at end of section). Guidelines for promotion follow closely those specified by the SGSPA in their [Academic Qualifications for Admission, Doctoral Program.](#)

To be considered for promotion to the PhD program, students must meet the following criteria:

- Have completed at least two terms of the Master's program, full time, and have completed at least two graduate courses (3.0 credit-unit courses). Normally, students will apply for transfer after the second term, but before the end of the fifth term, except under unusual circumstances;
- have an overall first-class average in graduate courses completed;
- meet departmental criteria for demonstrating promise and ability at research;
- apply, through the Department, to the appropriate Graduate Committee after the second term but before the end of the fifth term.

## **2 Procedure for Application to Geography Graduate Committee**

The student will meet with the Supervisor and Graduate Chair to agree upon whether transferring to the PhD program without completing the Master's thesis is a good strategy. During this meeting the ramifications of the transfer to the doctoral program are to be clearly outlined for the student. If approved by the Department, an application will be completed by the student for submission to the appropriate Geography Graduate Committee.

The following documents are required for submission to the Geography Graduate Committee and the appropriate Graduate Council:

- current transcript (internal transcript acceptable)
- a brief justification outlining the student's qualifications (to be completed by the supervisor)
- outline of student's current and proposed research
- completed application package (including 2 letters of reference) for admittance to the doctoral program.

The application will be forwarded to the Chair of the Geography Graduate Committee, who will either admit the student into the PhD program, or who will bring it to the next Geography Graduate Committee meeting for discussion. If the promotion is accepted by the Geography Graduate Committee, the application is then submitted to the SGSPA for final approval. If the Chair of that Council is not able to make a decision, and brings the application to the entire committee, the departmental Graduate Chair (or delegate from Geography and Planning) and the student's Supervisor will attend the Council meeting when this application is discussed.

## **3 Timing**

Transfer to the PhD program will be made official at the start of the term following approval by the appropriate Graduate Council.

## **4 PhD Qualifying Exam for Students Promoted to the PhD Program**

The PhD Qualifying (i.e. Comprehensive) exam should be taken as soon as possible after promotion to the PhD program but must be completed within 12 months after the start of enrollment in the PhD. All other procedures for the Qualifying Exam will follow procedures outlined in our [Ph.D. Requirements and Regulations](#).

**NOTE:**

In adhering to SGSPA [Academic Qualifications for Admission, Doctoral Program](#) guidelines, students promoted to a doctoral program may not revert back to the master's program within the same department/program, except in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Supervisor(s), the Graduate Chair, and the SGSPA.