



# Interdisciplinary PhD Program

## Guidelines for Students and Supervisors

Academic Year 2024-2025

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## 1. Admissions Process

Offers of admission to the IDPhD comes after a multidisciplinary committee has assessed all completed and eligible applications in any given year. Offers are official only as they are communicated from the School of Graduate Studies, although the Program Director might indicate earlier the decisions to come. Offers will normally be extended 6-8 weeks after the deadline for applications.

Once an offer of admission is extended, it is the applicant's responsibility to accept or decline. It is the student's responsibility to secure any required visas or study permits. All students should contact the [Internationalization Office](#) for assistance with these processes. All students should also follow the [SGS new student](#) step to admission.

## 2. Start of Program

Upon acceptance of an offer of admission, the supervisory committee will immediately begin work on arranging a meeting of the student to go through the details of the student's program. The Program Director will also meet with the student and the supervisory committee will communicate with the Program Director on the proposed arrangements.

Every ID program will be different, and students and supervisors must be prepared for a few meetings to establish all the program requirements and the timelines for completion of the program.

## 3. Registration

Once students register, their program registration is continued until they graduate or go on an approved Leave of Absence. Students will be charged fees as long as their program registration continues. In addition to the automatic registration in the program, students must register (usually through a Course Change Form) for each course required for their program.

## 4. Paying Tuition

Graduate students who wish to have their tuition paid out of their bi-weekly financial support can now request the service online through [Memorial University Self-Service](#).

In such cases, semester and ancillary fees will be allocated over the number of pay periods available within a given semester and will be deducted from bi-weekly support.

To sign up for payroll deductions through Self-Service, students may click on the "Employee Services" tab and then the "Graduate Student Payroll Deduction Request."

Graduate students signing up for payroll deductions **must do so every semester**. Current students already on funding will be able to sign up for online payroll deductions 24 hours after they register. New students will be able to sign up for online payroll deductions on the first day of classes.

All graduate students must complete their online submissions before the last day to register (two weeks after the start of classes). After the last day to register, you will not be able to sign up for payroll deductions until the following semester.

If eligible, opt out of health or dental insurance plans using opt-out forms available through the [Graduate Students' Union](#) (GSU) by the appropriate deadline (refer to the GSU website for more information). All registered international graduate students are automatically enrolled in an emergency health insurance plan. However, you may need to meet eligibility requirements to opt out of the mandatory plan. Please see the [International Student Advising](#) website for details.

## 5. Program Milestones

### a. Course work

Normally, all ID PhD students will be required to complete a number of graduate level courses (in some instances, undergraduate courses may also be added to a program after approval of both the supervisory committee and Program Director). The general range of required courses is between 3-6 (but no more than 6).

Courses must be chosen based on the relevance to the research program and graduate course availability. All ID PhD students need to seek permission to register in courses and this can be done with the assistance of the Director (or lead supervisor) if needed.

### b. Ethics Approval

Any research that uses materials from living subjects (including interviews and questionnaires) must be given an ethics review. This review must be undertaken before the start of the research and before application for any relevant funding. Students should ask the Program Director for details.

### [c. Comprehensive exams: Candidacy/Proposal defence examination](#)

All students and supervisors must be familiar with the [School of Graduate Studies regulations for comprehensive examinations](#).

#### **Purpose**

The Proposal defence satisfies Memorial University's General Calendar regulation 4.8.2 on PhD Comprehensive examinations.

Students should begin the proposal defense process as early as possible and should complete the proposal defence examination no later than 3 semesters following the completion of their course work requirements.

The examination is meant both to prepare students to write their dissertations and to elicit committee approval of their readiness for the final stage of their doctoral program. The principal objectives are to:

- Test mastery and depth of knowledge of thesis dissertation area(s) specified in the dissertation proposal
- Show exceptional written and oral communication skills;
- Show ability to communicate research to a general (but informed) audience; and
- Show excellent bibliographic and citation skills.

The ID PhD program is unique in its design and application process. Normally, all ID PhD comprehensives shall be as follows:<sup>1</sup>

Because all successful applicants come into the program with *a substantial* draft research proposal at the point of application, the proposal defense shall serve to solidify and assess that proposal.

As such, the examination will have a written portion and an oral portion.

The student shall be notified of the timing of their examination process a minimum of 3 months prior to the deadline of the written proposal. This notification shall include the deadline for the

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<sup>1</sup> Other formats shall be permitted only in exceptional circumstances and only if the alternative format is approved by both the Program Director and the Associate Dean (School of Graduate Studies) no later than the student's sixth semester. Approval requests must include the reasons for the exception as well as the same detail and timing information as this proposal defense format.

written proposal, the date of the oral exam, and the composition of the examination committee (Program Director, 3 supervisors/faculty advisors, plus one other member).

The written proposal must be submitted to all members of the examination committee via email as a word document on or before the deadline. See below for details on proposal expectations.

The examination committee will have no more than 10 days to read the proposal and decide if the student shall proceed to the oral or if a revision is required.

If revision is required, details of what needs to be done must be conveyed to the student in writing. The revised document must be submitted to the examination committee no more than *3 months* following that written communication.

Once the revised document is submitted, the examination committee must assess if it is acceptable to go to oral examination or if the student's program will be terminated due to a failed examination.

The oral examination will be scheduled no more than six weeks following positive assessment of the written document and no less than two weeks.

The oral exam shall involve:

- 30 min pre-meeting of examination committee
- 15-20 minute presentation by candidate
- No more than 2 rounds of questions by the examination committee
- *In camera* session of committee only to assess performance on the exam.

### **Examination: written and oral components**

The written part will consist of the student preparing a full research proposal. *The starting point of this full research proposal will be the original research proposal submitted at the time of the application.* It is understood and expected that the examination proposal document will be more advanced, more sophisticated, and more specific than the proposal submitted at the time of application.

The thesis proposal document must include the following information, but need not necessarily use the following headers or categories. It is understood that some deviation of the following may be necessary to accommodate individual research projects. Nonetheless, the following content must appear in the proposal in some form:

**1. Topic** – this section must provide an introduction to the topic, a justification of the primary sources, an explanation and contextualization of key terminology, and – most importantly – a set of research questions that clearly focus and delineate the direction of the research project.

2. Conceptual Framework – this section must place the research project inside existing frames of reference, theoretical models, or similar frameworks. The purpose of this section is to situate the research project inside a framework/perspective for pursuit of the research questions.

3. Methodology – this section indicates the process, method, stages of the research and/or a chapter breakdown of the dissertation. Any research requiring ethical clearance needs to be stated in this section as well as the type(s) of ethical approval required.

4. Scholarly significance/contribution to knowledge – this section must survey the existing scholarship on the dissertation topic and position the dissertation topic within that critical history. This section must also offer a clear indication of how the dissertation adds to that scholarship or addresses gaps or advances knowledge. If there are any initial findings, results, publication or presentation of original work already done by the student then this is the place to describe and document that information. Initial results might include a new theoretical argument, a preliminary output of a statistical analysis, an assessment of literature reviews, etc.

5. Chapter outline – this section indicates a proposed breakdown of chapter content.

6. Timeline to completion. Students are asked to very carefully consider a time line that is realistic and feasible. Students are also expected to provide a detailed time line.

7. Working bibliography – this section should be divided into primary and secondary texts and must conform scrupulously to the most recent citation guidelines that the supervisory committee agrees is appropriate

The written document must be a minimum of 20 pages (double spaced, 12pt font), not including the Bibliography and should be no more than 40 pages of same format.

The oral part of the exam will consist of questions that relate to the written part.

### **Assessment:**

Based on the quality of both the written and oral components, the examination committee may recommend one of the following outcomes:

- Pass (A simple majority vote is required. *Please note that the Chair of the committee has a vote*)
- Re-examination required (Re-examination means the student will sit a second oral component, no more than 4 weeks from the date of the first.). *A detailed report shall be given to the student in which areas of improvement are clearly indicated.*
- Fail (Failing grades require unanimous support of the Committee. Re-examination is not permitted)

No candidate shall be permitted more than two oral examinations in total.

*All thesis work needs to abide by ethical guidelines. It is highly advisable that even for the thesis proposal, ethics clearance has been sought. Without ethics clearance, research questions contained in the thesis proposal may not be deemed feasible by the committee.*

## 6. Thesis Examination

The university regulations concerning the examination of the doctoral thesis and the thesis defence are in the University Calendar under the “School of Graduate Studies–General Regulations” in the section entitled “Evaluation of Ph.D. Theses.”

All ID PhD students are **strongly** encouraged to compile a manuscript style thesis. Details on that style can be found in this [SGS document](#).

The thesis examining board has four members. In most cases, this board consists of:

- the candidate’s supervisor (a non-voting member);
- one external examiner (*a specialist who is well acquainted with interdisciplinary work*) from outside Memorial University); and,
- two internal examiners

With the exception of the supervisor, no one who has been involved in the preparation of the thesis is allowed to serve on the Thesis Examining Board. (Members of the comprehensive examination committee who have not been directly involved in the preparation of the thesis are eligible to serve on the Thesis Examining Board.)

As the thesis nears completion, the supervisor or the supervisory committee discuss with the candidate the names of possible examiners. The supervisor or supervisory committee then makes recommendations to the Director.

The Director considers the recommendations made by the supervisory committee, prepares a proposed list of examiners, and makes preliminary inquiries concerning the potential examiners’ willingness and ability to serve.

The proposed list is then forwarded by the Director to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who approves the composition of the Thesis Examining Board and issues the official invitations to serve.

When the supervisory committee approves the thesis for submission, it goes to the examiners for reading.

If the examiners approve the thesis for oral examination, a tentative date for the public oral defense is set by the Dean of Graduate Studies. It is generally understood that no contact among the various parties is permitted during the reading of the thesis in the time leading up to the oral defense.

The program is completed only when three copies of the finished, corrected thesis have been received and approved by the supervisory committee, the Director, and the School of Graduate Studies.

The student should be available for the crucial last stages of thesis completion. It is important to observe all the deadlines, because fees can be charged if the registration has to be carried forward for an extra semester term because of late work.



## **7. Professional Preparation**

The ID program encourages all graduate students to involve themselves in preparation for university teaching and other professional careers.

All students are encouraged to consider taking the [Graduate Program in Teaching](#) (offered through the School of Graduate Studies).

Since space in that program is limited, interested students are urged to apply early.

Any student who plans to apply for teaching work in a university should prepare a teaching dossier. This record of teaching should include letters from faculty who have observed classes, comments from teaching mentors, course outlines, samples of assignments, teaching evaluations, and a general statement on teaching.

Further information is available from the Program Director.

Students are also encouraged to present papers at conferences, either at Memorial or elsewhere.

## **8. School of Graduate Studies Support**

### **EDGE**

The Enhanced Development of the Graduate Experience (EDGE) is a comprehensive collection of professional development programs and services that help provide students with the complementary skills required to be successful in their lives after graduate school.

EDGE was initially launched in 2007 and retooled in 2013 after consulting various stakeholder groups and the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS) discussion paper, "[Professional Skills Development for Graduate Students.](#)"

## 9. Funding

### a. Annual funding award

Students who are admitted to the ID PhD program may receive funding in the amount of \$16,000 per year for 4 years in all. Not all students who are admitted receive funding. Part-time students are not considered for the annual funding award.

Funding is contingent upon satisfactory progress and is available to a maximum of four years.

### b. Conference funding

Limited [funding for conference travel](#) is available to our graduate students. Students should use a “Graduate Student Request for Travel Assistance” form (which can be obtained from the SGS office) to request funding from the School of Graduate Studies, the Graduate Students’ Union, and SGS. After their conference travel, students must submit their receipts for expenses incurred with a “Travel Claim A” form.

### c. Scholarship database

The School of Graduate Studies maintains a searchable database for other scholarships and awards. Students should consult this frequently:

<http://www.mun.ca/sgs/current/scholarships/>

## **10. Further Information, Leaves, Concerns, Conflict Resolution**

### ***a. Leaves of Absence and Program Extensions***

University policies on leaves of absence and program extensions are outlined in the University Calendar. Any students who are considering taking a leave of absence should consult the Program Director. [Forms to request a leave of absence](#) are available online at the SGS website.

### ***b. Conflict Resolution***

The Graduate Students' Union offers helpful guidelines on sexual harassment, discrimination, student complaints, and academic appeals. Students who have concerns in any of these areas are encouraged to consult the [GSU guidelines on conflict resolution](#).

SGS supports the GSU's position that potential conflicts between students and their teachers or supervisors should be handled as early and as informally as possible. Students who feel that they have been treated unfairly are encouraged to address their concerns in the first instance to the teacher or supervisor or committee involved. If, however, students feel that their concerns cannot be handled at this level, they should refer their concerns to Program Director. If the Program Director cannot address the concerns to the students' satisfaction, they may go to the School of Graduate Studies.

### ***c. Contact information***

**Dr. Emmanuel Haven** - [ehaven@mun.ca](mailto:ehaven@mun.ca)

Program Director

**Ms. Katrielle Edmond** – [edm428@mun.ca](mailto:edm428@mun.ca)

Program Administrative Staff