

University of Toronto
Department of
Molecular Genetics

GRADUATE HANDBOOK

version 2026a

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NEW IN THIS VERSION

2026a – September 2026 (changes from earlier versions are in [Appendix A](#))

- Policy/process change: Projected thesis completion date is now included on the [Terminal evaluation](#), so students should be prepared to provide an estimate.
- Policy/process change: The existing make-up process for moderate numbers of [missed seminars](#) (completing 1.5x the number of missed sessions in a subsequent term) has been formalized.
- Policy/process change: [Student seminar presentations](#) may not be recorded or streamed.
- Policy/process change: The [“Thesis Extension” form has been made redundant](#) due to the Thesis Writing Meeting.
- Clarification: A streamlined [Program Overview](#) has been added.
- Clarification: Some suggested sub-points have been added to the outline of the [committee meeting report](#).
- Clarification: Students can [reply to their committee meeting evaluations](#) via email and have their reply added to their file.
- Clarification: [MSc students’ third committee meetings](#) can be Terminal meetings if they are ready for them by the deadline.
- Clarification: If students undertake [work outside of Canada](#), they should complete Safety Abroad processes.
- Clarification: Major reorganization of the [Course Requirements](#) section to clarify courses and the equivalence between the current and past curricula.
- Clarification: MoGen [computational courses beyond the first](#) required course count towards topic course requirements.
- Clarification: [Topic courses should be completed by the end of fourth year](#) for most PhD students, to comply with SGS requirements.
- Clarification: The Graduate Program Coordinator is responsible for providing [reclassification/qualification ballots](#).
- Clarification: Rephrasing of the [MSc](#) and [PhD](#) thesis writing timelines for clarity.
- Clarification: Addition of the [possible outcomes of an MSc defence](#).
- Clarification: If the PhD thesis appraisal isn’t received by two weeks before the defence, the student should contact the Graduate Program Coordinator.
- Clarification: UTGSU coverage is an important [consideration for LOAs](#).
- Clarification: Further changes to wording and order throughout the Handbook to improve clarity and remove redundancies.
- Update: Minor wording updates to the policy on [personal time off](#).
- Update: Update to [PhD defence outcome categories](#) to match SGS.
- Update: Updates to [mental health and wellness resources](#).

To make it easier to find key information, each body section now starts with an **ESSENTIALS** overview of key points, with links to relevant sections. Students are still responsible for knowing the full policies and processes listed in this Handbook.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Common Start – MSc & PhD

Year	Term	Research	Courses (see Curriculum Overview)
1	Fall	☐ Rotations	☐ Core Course ☐ Attend 18+ seminar presentations
	Winter	☐ Join permanent lab (by Jan 1) ☐ Choose committee (by Feb 1) ☐ Hold first committee meeting (by Mar 31)	☐ Colloquium ☐ Computational course(s) ☐ Attend 18+ seminar presentations ☐ Complete Graduate Research Integrity Workshop (if not completed in Fall)
2	Fall	☐ Hold second committee meeting (by Sept 30)	☐ Presentation Skills course ☐ Attend 18+ seminar presentations
	Winter	☐ Hold third committee meeting (by Mar 31) ○ TTC/Terminal if proceeding with MSc ○ Pre-reclass/pre-qual if proceeding with PhD	☐ 2 nd -year presentation ☐ Attend 18+ seminar presentations

MSc path

Year	Term	Research	Courses (see Curriculum Overview)
3+	All	☐ Continue TTC meetings every 6 months until ready for Terminal ☐ Hold Terminal meeting ☐ 4 months to write and defend	

PhD path

Year	Term	Research	Courses (see Curriculum Overview)
2	Summer	☐ Hold reclass/qual exam (by May 30)	
3	Fall		☐ Attend 18+ seminar presentations ☐ Begin taking Topic Courses (recommended)
	Winter/Summer	☐ Hold fourth committee meeting (by June 30)	☐ Attend 18+ seminar presentations
4	Fall		☐ 4 th -year presentation ☐ Attend 18+ seminar presentations
	Winter/Summer	☐ Hold fifth committee meeting (by June 30) – TTC	☐ Attend 18+ seminar presentations ☐ Complete Topic Courses
5+	All	☐ Hold TTC meetings at least yearly until ready for Terminal ☐ Hold Terminal meeting ☐ 6 months to write and defend	

Students starting in January will have research milestones shifted back one term, and course requirements shifted to the next available term. Leaves of absence will also shift milestones based on the length of the leave. Contact the Learning Strategist if you'd like to confirm your individual timeline.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Department Leadership

<i>Advisory Committee to the Chair</i>	
Timothy Hughes, Chair t.hughes@utoronto.ca	Julie Claycomb, Vice Chair, Education & Operations julie.claycomb@utoronto.ca
William Navarre, Associate Chair & Mentorship Coordinator william.navarre@utoronto.ca	Richard Collins, Associate Chair & Workload Coordinator rick.collins@utoronto.ca
Erin Styles, Associate Chair & Undergraduate Coordinator erin.styles@utoronto.ca	Martina Steiner, Coordinator, Careers, Communication & Alumni Relations martina.steiner@utoronto.ca
Daniel Schramek, LTRI Representative schramek@lunenfeld.ca	
Lori Frappier, Associate Chair & Graduate Coordinator lori.frappier@utoronto.ca	Sean Egan, Associate Chair & Associate Graduate Coordinator segan@sickkids.ca

<i>Administrative Staff</i>	
Kyle Turner, Learning Strategist, Graduate Programs mogen.learning@utoronto.ca	Sabeen Nauman, Admissions & Student Services Officer mgy.info@utoronto.ca
Joshua Paglione, Graduate Program Coordinator graduate.coordinator@utoronto.ca	
<i>Please see the Administration page for guidance on which staff members to contact for different processes.</i>	

Designated Examiners

Designated Examiners take part in various examinations in the department, serving as an important mechanism to achieve parity across students' examinations.

They serve the following roles:

- Examiner or Chair of the Reclassification/Qualification Examining Committee
- Chair of the MSc Defence Examining Committee
- Time to Completion (TTC) meetings, as needed

The current list of Designated Examiners is found on the [Examinations page](#).

Course Coordinators

- **MMG1001, Foundational Genetic Approaches I:** Dr. Howard Lipshitz
- **MMG1003, First Year Colloquium:** Dr. Julie Lefebvre
- **MMG1004, Practical Programming for Biologists:** Dr. Brett Trost
- **MMG1113, MSc Presentation Skills:** Dr. Peter Roy & Dr. Richard Collins
- **MMG1111, Graduate Seminars I:** Dr. Richard Collins
- **MMG1112, Graduate Seminars II:** Dr. Richard Collins
- **MMG1344H, Foundational Computational Biology I:** Dr. Jüri Reimand
- **MMG1345H, Foundational Computational Biology II:** Dr. Jüri Reimand

Course coordinators also serve as the coordinators of the [equivalent courses across curricula](#). Students enrolled prior to September 2021 remain enrolled in umbrella courses: MMG1041 Topics in Molecular Genetics (or if before September 2019 you will be enrolled in MMG1016, MMG1012 Topic Courses). Dr. Lori Frappier and Dr. Sean Egan serve as course coordinators for these umbrella courses.

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

The Department offers both MSc and PhD degrees in Molecular Genetics. Students who enter with a BSc degree may either enter the MSc program or be admitted directly into the PhD program (Direct Entry PhD), depending on their preference and qualifications. Those who enter into the MSc program have several options: a) complete their MSc degree; b) successfully complete a reclassification exam and transfer to the PhD program in their second year; or c) complete their MSc degree then apply for re-admission to the PhD program. Students with a BSc degree who are admitted directly into the PhD program must pass a qualification exam during their second year.

Students who enter with an MSc degree from our program can be accepted into the PhD program (PhD regular) and will not have to repeat the first two years of courses. In most cases, these students must still pass a qualification exam during their second year, unless their MSc Examination Committee gave a specific recommendation to bypass the qualification exam (see [Defending an MSc with Subsequent Admission to the PhD Program](#)).

The Department of Molecular Genetics also offers two professional Master's Programs, each with a duration of two years:

- The [Master's of Science Program in Genetic Counselling](#) is offered in collaboration with the Division of Clinical and Metabolic Genetics in the Department of Pediatrics of the Hospital for Sick Children and the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Mount Sinai Hospital, University of Toronto. This MSc in Genetic Counselling Program is accredited as a graduate level training program by the American Board of Genetic Counseling.
- The [Master's of Health Sciences in Medical Genomics Program](#) is a two-year, course-based professional Master's in Health Sciences that is the first of its kind in Canada. It has been developed for a new era of research and clinical science, providing professional and practical skills for a world where genetic and genomic data are routinely collected and analyzed across a wide range of patient populations and medical indications. No thesis is required for this degree, and instead training culminates in a Capstone Practicum. Additional details on each of these programs can be found on our website.

Collaborative Specializations

Members of the department participate in two interdepartmental collaborative specializations that provide students with the opportunity to benefit from the wealth of expertise in the University of Toronto community in areas of research that span the boundaries between traditional departments:

- [Developmental Biology](#)
- [Genome Biology & Bioinformatics](#)
- [Next Generation Precision Medicine](#)

Computational Biology Molecular Genetics (CBMG) PhD Track

Data and technology increasingly drive molecular genetics, and computational biology plays a critical role in these advances. Computational biologists use physics, math, or computer science methods to model biological processes or analyze genomic data, for example. The availability and continuing generation of large-scale datasets and data analysis have created a high demand for researchers with advanced computational skills and a strong grasp on molecular biology.

The CBMG track aims to provide students with an immersive computational biology education. Students are admitted to the Molecular Genetics PhD program directly and are provided opportunities and courses specific to their discipline to maximize their training potential, including Foundational Computational Biology I and II (MMG1344 and MMG1345).

This track is for both life science graduates with some computational expertise as well as quantitative graduates (math, physics, computer science). It incorporates coursework to provide a strong foundation for all students in both computational methods and molecular genetics knowledge. Learn more on the [CBMG page](#) on our website.

Duration of Programs

The Department of Molecular Genetics has put in place policies and procedures designed to ensure the timely completion of our MSc and PhD degrees. The total length of the MSc program is expected to be 2-3 years. The total length of the PhD program is expected to be 5-7 years after commencing graduate studies in the Department (see “[Time to Completion Meeting](#)”). Students are encouraged to proactively seek support from the Department if they are encountering barriers delaying their anticipated completion.

Students who go beyond the program limit must request an extension from the School of Graduate Studies (please see [SGS Student Forms](#)).

Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity, and Excellence

The Department of Molecular Genetics is committed to fostering a research community in which each member can contribute, learn, excel, and benefit from a diversity of perspectives. We attract students, staff, and faculty from a range of backgrounds, and we aim to utilize this diversity to build an ever-stronger training environment as we strive for excellence. We will strive to provide a welcoming and accommodating environment to all - including sexual and gender minorities, racialized people, people with economic disadvantages, and people with disabilities.

The Department of Molecular Genetics and its graduate program operates in the context of the Temerty Faculty of Medicine, the School of Graduate Studies, and the University of Toronto, all of which have fully committed to principles and programs for equity and diversity. We encourage all members of our community, especially our graduate students, to learn more about equity initiatives around campus through the Temerty Faculty of Medicine’s Office of Inclusion and Diversity, and the University of Toronto’s Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office.

To learn more, visit the pages of the [TFoM Office of Inclusion and Diversity \(OID\)](#) and [University of Toronto Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office \(ARCDO\)](#).

ROTATIONS

ESSENTIALS

- Incoming students will be placed in first rotations based on rankings, then arrange their own second and third rotations themselves.
- You must rotate in at least two different nodes.
- If you can't find a final placement, you can request a [fourth rotation](#).
- Students with an MSc or those in the MD/PhD program can request to [bypass rotations](#).

Our Department does not require non-visa (domestic) students to pre-arrange a permanent Supervisor prior to joining the program. Instead, rotations are an important feature of our program. New students must rotate through three laboratories before choosing a permanent laboratory and Supervisor. Rotations allow students to sample different research areas and thus to make a well-informed choice of research topics, laboratory environments and Supervisors. Students are not allowed to make an official commitment to permanently join a lab until the end of the rotation period.

Each rotation spans approximately five weeks. Rotations begin on the first Tuesday after Labour Day in September, and end at the end of Fall term. The exact dates of each rotation will be communicated to students by Orientation each year.

Arranging Rotations

The Department arranges the first rotation for each student before they start the program. In the summer before starting, each incoming student will fill out an online survey in which they rank their top five choices of laboratories in which they would like to rotate, from a list of faculty members who have indicated they will be accepting students. The first rotation is then assigned based on the stated preferences of the student, though choices may be limited by the availability of space within faculty members' laboratories. The majority of students are placed within their top three selected labs for this rotation. Timelines for the ranking survey and assignments will be communicated to incoming students over the summer.

Second and third rotation choices are entirely up to the student, with consent from the selected laboratory and review by the Graduate Coordinators. Students should make second and third rotation choices only after starting in the program in September. Students can make more informed rotation choices after they have gained experience in the department. These rotations are arranged through direct communication between students and potential Supervisors and must be finalized at least one week before the commencement of said rotation. These choices will be submitted to the grad administrators through a link supplied by email. More detailed instructions will be provided each year to rotation students.

Students are required to rotate in at least two different geographic nodes of the Department. Students should keep this in mind when planning and selecting rotation labs. The major departmental nodes are:

- Medical Sciences Building (MSB),
- Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute (LTRI),

- Donnelly Centre (DC),
- Ontario Institute for Cancer Research (OICR),
- Peter Gilgan Centre for Research & Learning (PGCRL), and
- MaRS West Tower (MaRS).

We have found that students can make better-informed rotation choices once they gain firsthand experience in the department. To help students gain additional insight, the Department holds a yearly Retreat in September. At the Retreat, faculty present talks on their research, trainees present posters on their work, and there is additional time for informal interaction to learn about rotation labs. During or ahead of the retreat, the Department also hosts a Power Hour, where faculty attempt to summarize their lab's research into a two-minute talk.

Your final placement must be from among the labs that you rotated in. Even if you have previous experience in a lab (e.g., from undergraduate research), you must rotate in that lab if you intend to choose a final spot there. In these cases, we recommend that the familiar lab be your third rotation.

Students and Supervisors may not make any final decisions about laboratory choices until near the end of the mandatory rotation period. The date will vary each year and will be communicated to students in the fall.

New students are encouraged to seek the advice of senior students and students currently in the labs they are considering when choosing their rotations and permanent placement. The Learning Strategist and Graduate Coordinators are also available to counsel students regarding rotation selection. Additionally, we recommend consulting departmental web resources like [Rocking Your Rotations](#) and [Lab Rotations 101](#), particularly noting the suggested questions for prospective supervisors.

Inability to Find a Permanent Lab

In rare occasions where a student does not find a permanent lab after the first three rotations, a fourth rotation may be permitted, with approval from the Graduate Coordinators. If a student is unable to find a permanent thesis Supervisor after four rotations, they will have to withdraw from the program. Admission to our program does not guarantee that a student will be accepted into a laboratory for their thesis work. It is extremely rare, however, for an accepted student to not find a suitable laboratory to join. Transfers to other graduate programs may be possible. Please notify the Graduate Coordinator as soon as possible if you are unable to place after three rotations.

International/Visa Student Rotations

Although international (visa) students are required to find a Supervisor prior to admission, these arrangements are generally not final. Visa students are required to do the same number of rotations as non-visa students, and they are free to join a laboratory other than that of their sponsor. In sponsoring international MSc students, however, faculty members make a commitment to accept those students into their laboratories if the student wishes to join after completing the mandatory rotations. This is not true of sponsored international PhD students. Once a permanent laboratory is chosen, the procedures for visa students are identical to those for non-visa students.

Opting Out of Rotations

Students Who Have Completed an MSc

PhD applicants who will receive their MSc prior to starting their graduate program in Molecular Genetics have the option of forgoing rotations and directly joining a lab. To be eligible for opting out of rotations, the applicant must arrange a prospective Supervisor as part of their application package. When the survey for first rotations is sent out, the student should complete the survey indicating that they are willing to forgo the rotation process. The Supervisor should also email the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Program Coordinator indicating their willingness at this time.

MD/PhD Students

MD/PhD students may choose to directly enter a lab (with the Supervisor's permission). When the survey for first rotations is sent out, the student should complete the survey indicating that they are willing to forgo the rotation process. The Supervisor should also email the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Program Coordinator indicating their willingness at this time.

Financial Support During Rotations

Students will be paid the standard stipend during the rotation period. See the [Student Funding section](#) for information on rotation stipends.

Switching Labs after Rotation Period

On rare occasions, a student will move to a different lab and Supervisor to carry out their thesis project after the rotation period has ended. This move can be initiated only by the student, not the Supervisor, and can occur only after the student has discussed the situation in detail with the Graduate Coordinator (and the initial Supervisor when appropriate). This possibility will be assessed by the Graduate Coordinator on a case-by-case basis, considering factors like stage of the degree and progress so far.

STUDENT SUPERVISION

ESSENTIALS

- Students and supervisors should [complete an IDP](#) together regularly
- [Co-supervision](#) between two MoGen faculty is permitted, though it can create supervision challenges. New co-supervision is approved via the Co-Supervision Agreement, and any changes to co-supervision must be communicated to the Learning Strategist.
- Students must [form a supervisory committee](#) by the end of their fifth month in the program, following certain rules for committee composition. New committees and any subsequent updates are submitted via the [Committee Selection Form](#).
- All committee meetings should be [logged via the Committee Meeting form](#)
- Each meeting report has [required sections](#), including additional sections for pre-exam, TTC, and Terminal meetings
- To stay in good academic standing, students must [hold regular committee meetings](#):
 - Every six months for PhD students in the first two years and MSc students
 - By June of each year for upper-year PhD students
- If an [overall grade of “Unsatisfactory \(Fail\)”](#) is received at a meeting, another meeting must be held within three months

Individual Development Plan

The Individual Development Plan (IDP, found on the [Forms & Links page](#)) is an assessment and planning document intended to open a and guide discussion between student and Supervisor. The IDP covers topics that students have found essential to discuss with their mentors. It encourages both student and Supervisor to think actively about training, and fosters open communication between mentor and mentee. If you have additional questions or objectives related to your training, these meetings are a great time to bring them up and set action steps.

The IDP is to be completed before the first Committee Meeting, and then every year in association with Committee Meetings. Only the student and Supervisor will view and discuss the IDP, but there is an accountability section included on the Committee Meeting Evaluation Report.

Supervisor

Supervisors are expected to:

- Oversee student research, upholding degree requirements, quality, research integrity, safety, and other mandates. Supervisors set expectations for experimental work and recordkeeping.
- Assist students in identifying members for Supervisory Committees and Examination Committees.
- Monitor student progress, keeping students on track with required Committee Meetings and exams, and accommodating required course work.

- Attend student Committee Meetings, student seminar presentations, and qualification and thesis exams. Students are responsible for scheduling meetings and exams with Supervisors and making them aware of seminar dates. Supervisors are also expected to help students prepare by providing feedback on slides and reports and providing opportunities for practice talks.
- Have regular meetings with students. The Department recommends that students meet one-on-one with their Supervisors at least monthly, though biweekly or weekly are preferred. Consider increasing the frequency of meetings around key program milestones.
- Be communicative and responsive with students, responding to emails within 1-3 business days when possible, and making students aware of availability.
- Create and uphold an inclusive lab environment (see [Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity, and Excellence](#))
- Aid students in understanding relevant policies and accessing useful resources.
- Report payroll changes (external awards, program transfers, leaves of absence, withdrawal/graduation, etc.) to the Business Officer.

Co-Supervision

If it is in the best interest of a student and their project, the Department will consider allowing the student to be co-supervised by two professors within our Department after consultation with the Graduate Coordinator. The details of the relationship between the student and the two Co-Supervisors (where the student will work, whose lab meetings they will attend, what fraction of the stipend each Supervisor is responsible for etc.) will vary on a case-by-case basis. The details of the relationship, however, should be agreed upon at the onset of the co-supervision. Co-Supervisory arrangements must be discussed by both Co-Supervisors and the student, and then detailed using the [Co-Supervision Form](#), which must be submitted to the Learning Strategist to be approved by the Graduate Coordinator.

Note that once a Co-Supervisor is appointed, there is no primary/secondary Supervisor; each are considered equal mentors and are equally responsible for the student. If an existing Supervisory Committee member becomes a Co-Supervisor, a replacement for that Supervisory Committee member should be found as soon as possible and approved via the regular [process for Committee change](#) and abiding by the rules of Committee member assignments (below). Co-supervision may involve no more than two Co-Supervisors within the Department. Co-supervisory arrangements with faculty outside of the Department are not permitted by SGS.

If the co-supervised student and/or the Co-Supervisors consider changing the co-supervision status, the Graduate Coordinator should be consulted before any changes are made. Any agreed upon changes to the co-supervisory relationship should then be reported to the Learning Strategist immediately via an email in which all relevant parties are cc'd, with a new Co-Supervision Form. Otherwise, all parties will be held to their initial agreement should any disagreements arise in the future.

Supervisory Committee

- The Committee monitors a student's progress regularly during their graduate career and provides guidance related to degree completion.

- Committee members counsel, advise and assist the student (both during and outside of Committee Meetings), including assessing work (reports, presentations, exams, and theses), providing project-related expertise, and advising on topic course selection.
- Members of the Committee attend Committee Meetings, exams, and student seminar presentations. It is the responsibility of the student to coordinate scheduling of meetings and exams with Committee members, and to alert them to seminar presentations.
- Committee members write reference letters in support of student award applications and career progression. The student is responsible for requesting letters with sufficient lead time.
- The Committee acts to maintain equal standards of student supervision across the Department. The Supervisor and the Supervisory Committee identify when a student is not making adequate progress and document it on the Supervisory Committee Evaluation Report. In consultation with the student, they devise approaches to remedy the problem, including suggesting additional courses and advising on experimental strategies.
- Committee members also support and advocate for the student in the event of conflict with the Supervisor.

Required timelines for Supervisory Committee meetings are detailed below, though students or Committee members may opt for more frequent meetings.

Forming and Changing the Supervisory Committee

The Committee is composed of the student's Supervisor(s) and a minimum of two other University of Toronto graduate faculty members. Students and Supervisors are encouraged to choose a Supervisory Committee that is limited to a total of two Committee members (excluding the Supervisor(s)) to avoid potential scheduling difficulties that can arise with additional Committee members. However, if the student and Supervisor feel that the benefits of increased expertise on the Committee outweigh any potential scheduling difficulties, one additional member may be invited to join the Committee of a sole-supervised student, to a maximum size of four members including the Supervisor.

Of the Committee members:

- At least one of these must be a Molecular Genetics faculty member.
- At least one of these must be a Molecular Genetics faculty member from a different node than the student's lab. In some cases, a faculty member from another department can be used to meet this requirement.
- At least one of these must be a Molecular Genetics faculty member who has an arm's-length relationship with the Supervisor and the student (i.e., is not a collaborator on the project, a spouse, etc.).
- At least one of these must have expertise different from that of the Supervisor.

Please note that one Committee member may fulfill multiple (or even all) of these criteria. The choice of additional Committee members beyond requirements is not restricted with respect to their node, departmental affiliation, or arm's length relationship with the student/Supervisor.

The student and Supervisor jointly choose the Supervisory Committee, which must be submitted via the [Supervisory Committee Selection](#) form and approved by the Department before the first

Committee Meeting is arranged. Students are encouraged to identify their committee as soon as possible after choosing their final lab, to leave sufficient time for scheduling the first Committee Meeting. The Supervisory Committee composition must be chosen by **February 1st** (for September entrants) or May 1st (for January entrants) at the latest. More detailed instructions will be provided to students each year.

One of the Committee members will be designated as the permanent Chair of the Committee. This member must be a Molecular Genetics faculty member and cannot be the Supervisor or Co-Supervisor. The Committee Chair may be changed, with no departmental approval needed.

If the student and Supervisor(s) wish to change the members of the Supervisory Committee, they should discuss this with the Committee and any prospective new members. Once a change is agreed to by all, the student should submit the change via the [Supervisory Committee Selection](#) form for departmental approval. The new committee must meet all the same requirements as forming a new committee (detailed above).

There should be two Supervisory Committee members (in addition to Supervisor(s)) present at all meetings. If a Supervisory Committee member is on leave or sabbatical for an extended time and this leaves only one other member, the student and Supervisor should invite an additional member to sit on the Committee during the leave. If there are more than two additional members on the Committee (excluding Supervisor(s)), this is not necessary. Such temporary changes do not need to be approved by the Department, and can simply be noted on the [Supervisory Committee Meeting Form](#). The progress report should also be sent to the member on leave. Should the student and Supervisor decide to maintain this additional member after the original Committee member returns from leave/sabbatical, this should be logged as described above.

Note that if a desired committee member is on leave or sabbatical and unable to attend the **first** committee meeting, a different member should be chosen, and the student can request to add the member on sabbatical at a later date.

If a student is having difficulties, or at their request, a Designated Examiner or member of the Executive Committee may be assigned to attend one or more Committee Meetings.

Committee Meetings

Setting Up Committee Meetings

Committee meetings must be held at least every six months for PhD students in the first two years of the program and for MSc students. PhD students post-reclassification/qualification must hold meetings at least once per year. A detailed breakdown of each meeting and the respective deadlines [is found below](#). These are minimum requirements for maintaining good academic standing and remaining eligible for funding and continued registration. See the [Policy on Funding & Program Length](#) for more information.

To ensure that deadlines are met, students are encouraged to begin planning meetings six to eight weeks in advance of the desired date. Using [FindTime](#) or [Doodle Polls](#) is a helpful approach to

scheduling Committee Meetings (but try to narrow the number of slots to less than ten, so as not to overwhelm your Committee members), and students are recommended to [send a calendar invitation](#) to block off the final time. To further aid in scheduling, the student and Committee should take time at the end of each meeting to discuss availabilities around the time of the next meeting and ideally pencil in a date. The student should then check in several weeks ahead of the planned date to confirm availability.

Note: the timeline to organize the first committee meeting is tight, so students are encouraged to begin selecting their committee as soon as they've found their final lab and avoid waiting until the final selection deadline.

Important: For every meeting, students must complete the [Supervisory Committee Meeting Form](#) **at least seven days** before the meeting. UTORid login is required; if the form gives a 'no access' error, try loading in a private window or new browser. The student must use the form to provide their meeting details and upload their report, along with their previous evaluation. The form will then automatically email this information to the committee (with a reminder calendar invitation), log the details to the student's file, and provide a link to the evaluation form. Not logging meetings using this form may make it appear that a meeting has been missed.

Committee Meeting Progress Report

The body of the Committee Meeting progress report should be a maximum of four pages (single-spaced, 12-point uncondensed Times New Roman font, 2 cm margins). The four pages do not include the cover page, title page, 300-word abstract, references, figures, tables, and the summary of achievements.

The start of the report should include:

- A title page: Name, date of entry into the graduate program, project title, list of Committee Members, meeting location, date and time.
- An abstract briefly (300 words or less) summarizing the background and main goals of the research.

The body of the report (4 pages or less) should detail:

- The background for your project.
- The main objective and specific aims of your project.
 - Questions you're intending to answer
 - Expected outcomes of experiments
- A summary of progress described at previous Committee Meetings.*
- A summary of the progress made since the last Committee Meeting.*
- A summary of the recommendations or concerns that were made at the last Committee Meeting and an explanation of how these were addressed (or why they were not addressed).*

**These starred sections are not required for [the first Committee Meeting](#).*

- A summary of what experiments are planned in the near future (i.e., six months to a year), and what goals remain to be achieved to complete the thesis.
 - Potential pitfalls and alternatives
 - Timelines

The additional sections (not included in the 4-page limit) include:

- [*Pre-reclassification/pre-qualification meeting*](#) only: A one-page outline of the reclassification/qualification proposal.
- [*Time to Completion meeting*](#) only: A projected thesis outline and timeline of remaining experiments (more detail [below](#)).
- [*Terminal meeting*](#) only: A one- to two-page outline of the proposed thesis.
- A summary of achievements since starting graduate school: a list of awards, meeting abstracts, publications (submitted, in press, or published).
- Figures: These should be included in the report to make it easier to describe the research.
- List of references as needed.

In most cases (with supervisory review), students can alter the recommended order to facilitate logical flow. However, omitting components or deviating from the page limits will result in a low mark in the “[Quality of Report](#)” section of Committee Meeting Report and may be reflected in your overall score for the meeting and/or entitle Supervisory Committee members to request a revised report that adheres to these guidelines before the meeting can proceed.

Consult your Supervisor about recommended lengths for each component of the body and whether they have any additional requirements that they would like to see included. It is also recommended that students obtain examples of Supervisory Committee reports from their labmates or other senior graduate students (the GSA has [examples on their webpage](#)).

Be sure that reports are submitted through [the form](#) seven days before each meeting—delays in sharing the report may result in a lower mark for the Quality of the Report section of the Committee Evaluation Report. Establish a timeline with your Supervisor for when they would need to receive any report drafts for review ahead of submission.

Supervisory Committee Meeting Procedure

At all Committee Meetings:

- Before the start of the meeting, the Supervisor should be asked to leave the room for a few moments, allowing the student time to confidentially discuss any issues, concerns, questions, etc. with their Committee. After this, the student leaves the room, and the Supervisor takes a few moments to brief the Committee on the trajectory of the project and on ways they can help advance the science. **These steps should not be skipped.**
- The student must give a presentation on their experimental progress. This presentation starts with a brief synopsis of the project background, main goals, and key previous findings. The students can expect to be interrupted with questions during the presentation. To leave time for discussion, students should aim for not more than 20-30 minutes’ worth of slides, not including interruptions.
- There should be at least 15 minutes of questions on general background knowledge relevant to the project. These background questions do not all have to be asked at the same time, but the Committee should ensure that this amount of background questioning occurs during the Committee Meeting.
- The student is asked to leave the room at the end of the meeting. The Committee members then candidly discuss their overall impression of the student’s progress.
- A Supervisory Committee Evaluation Report is filled in [online](#) (see below) and marks are assigned for various aspects of the student’s performance in the program.

- The student is invited back into the room for discussion and feedback, provide recommendations, and to review any concerns regarding the project and/or the student. The Committee Chair discusses the marks and recommendations with the student and submits the form on behalf of all Supervisory Committee members.
- The student and Committee should also take time to discuss timing for the next Committee Meeting.
- The student will receive a copy of the evaluation through email. If the email is not received, the student should alert the Learning Strategist for troubleshooting. The student is entitled to send an email response to their evaluation, and this will be added to their file.

The total time for a Committee Meeting, including the oral presentation that is interrupted by questions, and the period of student evaluation and feedback, should not exceed 2 hours.

Evaluation Report

The Chair of the Committee is responsible for filling out the [Supervisory Committee Evaluation Report](#) at every meeting (except for exams, defences, and the pre-reclass/qualification meeting). The Chair communicates the Committee's assessment of the student's progress to the student. Other Committee members may then elaborate.

The student will be marked in several categories using the following categorical scale:

- Exceeds Expectations
- Meets Expectations
- Needs Improvement
- Unsatisfactory (Fail)

Scores of "Unsatisfactory" are considered [a failing grade](#). Over time, it generally takes improvement on the part of the student to simply maintain the same grade obtained in previous meetings, as the expectations are higher with continued time in the program. Committee members are urged to use the full scale and to mark students in relation to other students at the same level.

Categories graded are as follows:

- **Background Knowledge:** This must be specifically tested at each Committee Meeting with at least 15 min of questioning in this area. Students are expected to have knowledge in areas that are not directly related to their thesis topic but relevant to their general research area. Questions should be the same type of background questions that are asked on reclassification/qualification exams and MSc and PhD defences. Questions should also probe the student's ability to place their work in a wider context (i.e., "The Big Picture").
- **Understanding of the System:** The Committee should evaluate the student's familiarity with the directly relevant literature and experimental techniques, experimental design, and overall rationale/logic of the project.
- **Initiative/Leadership:** This section is intended to evaluate how engaged in the project the student is. Are they reading the literature and generating their own new ideas for the project? Are they working efficiently and spending their time in the lab productively?

Have they taken ownership and initiative over the project and are not simply going through motions?

- **Experimental Skills:** The Committee will assess the quality of the data throughout the presentation. This section addresses whether a student can successfully execute the experiments they have set out to perform, include appropriate controls, and generate high quality data from which conclusions can be drawn. This section also relates to whether students are intrepid in their experiments: Do they attempt and master new techniques?
- **Critical Thinking:** This includes the ability to independently troubleshoot experiments, design proper experiments including controls, critically evaluate data, and construct sensible hypotheses to explain results.
- **Organizational Skills:** This covers whether the student organizes their experiments, data, and thoughts clearly. Are they keeping appropriate notes and records on their experiments? Are they properly maintaining the data they acquire? This also covers how they communicate their data and organize their thoughts. Is the information flow logical and clear or disorganized and nonlinear?
- **Progress:** Based on the elapsed time, complexity of the experiments, and any other confounding variables, has the student achieved the goals they set out to address since their last meeting? Have they generated new data? Is the student on an appropriate timeline for their degree?
- **Communication with Supervisor:** Does the student initiate discussions about their project, data, and progress? Do they share new data and ideas routinely with the PI?
- **Quality of Report:** Is the report clear, logical, and well-organized? Are there grammatical and spelling mistakes? Are all of the important components included? Was the report handed in 7 days before the meeting?
- **Quality of Oral Presentation:** This segment addresses how clear, well-organized, and on point the presentation was. Was there sufficient background? Were the questions framed well and data presented clearly, with appropriate conclusions drawn? Did the student speak loudly and clearly enough?

An **Overall Score** is assigned based on the overall performance and component scores. If an Overall Score of “Unsatisfactory (Fail)” is assigned, the student must hold another committee meeting within 3 months—see [Lack of Sufficient Progress](#).

Committee Meeting Descriptions and Deadlines

The School of Graduate Studies requires that students meet departmental committee meeting deadlines to maintain good academic standing. To meet requirements and to ensure continued progress (and hitting milestones like the reclass/qual exam), it's important not to delay or miss required Committee Meetings. Though it can be tempting to wait until more work has been completed, the Committee Meeting is intended to be a discussion of work in progress, and so it's best to proceed on schedule. Students and Committees are always entitled to request additional/earlier meetings.

Although the Department monitors the timing of Committee Meetings, it is the student's responsibility to schedule these meetings. Professors have been informed that they are expected to respond to the student's emails as soon as possible. If a professor does not respond to a student's email within four days, the student should send an email reminder. If no response to the

reminder is received within three days, the student should inform the Learning Strategist or the Graduate Coordinator. They will then contact the professor(s).

If students anticipate not meeting a meeting deadline, they **must** contact the Learning Strategist or Graduate Coordinator well in advance of the deadline to inform them of the challenges and determine how to proceed. If a meeting is missed without informing the department, the School of Graduate Studies indicates that a failing grade should be assigned for the missed meeting.

MSc & PhD: First Meeting

Month 7: By the end of March of 1st year (July for Jan. starts)

At this meeting, students should outline the broad objectives of their project and the specific short-term goals to be achieved in the first year. Students should demonstrate a grasp of the key issues in the project and some knowledge of important background information. Students may or may not have preliminary data to support the proposed aims of the project.

The initial project should be sufficiently technically feasible such that within one year it will be possible to judge the student's technical and intellectual abilities as they bear on continuing in the graduate program. It is the responsibility of the student, the Supervisor, and the Supervisory Committee to guide the choice of the research project. When considering projects, MSc projects must have the potential to develop further if the student reclassifies into the PhD program. Both MSc and PhD projects should seek to test an interesting hypothesis or further investigate an important biological question. Other factors to consider when choosing a project include the potential novelty of the project, the degree of risk, and the presence of "fall-back" projects if the primary project fails.

MSc & PhD: Second Meeting

Month 13: By the end of September of 2nd year (January for Jan. starts)

By this meeting, the student should have demonstrated intellectual and technical ability along with a good grasp of the general project area. A greater command of background knowledge will be expected at this meeting. The Committee should be satisfied at the second meeting that the problem chosen has a reasonable likelihood of leading to an acceptable reclassification proposal or MSc thesis.

Between the second and third committee meeting, MSc students should work with their Supervisors to determine whether they will proceed with the reclassification exam or finish with an MSc. If the former, they proceed to the [Pre-Reclassification meeting](#); if the latter, they hold a regular third meeting with a time to completion discussion (below).

MSc track: Third Meeting & Onward—Time to Completion

Month 19: By the end of March of 2nd year (July for Jan. starts) and at least every six months moving forward

At this meeting, a clear plan should be agreed upon for the completion of the degree program. It should follow the format of the PhD [Time to Completion Meeting](#), wherein the student discusses a projected thesis outline and plan for further experiments, which is included as an addition to their usual four-page report. The experiments proposed should take no more than **six months** to finish. All other aspects are as other Committee Meetings.

Ideally, the fourth MSc meeting will be a [Terminal Meeting](#). If this isn't the case, the student must continue to hold meetings **at least every six months** and include a 'time to completion' discussion until the Terminal Meeting is held.

Note that the third meeting may alternatively be a Terminal Meeting, if you are prepared by that stage. A Time to Completion meeting is only required if you are not yet ready to hold a Terminal.

PhD track: Third Meeting—Pre-Reclassification/Pre-Qualification Meeting

Month 19: By the end of March of 2nd year (July for Jan. starts)

This meeting cannot be held late if students want to proceed to the exam, and students are reminded that holding this meeting earlier leaves more time for exam preparation.

The pre-reclass/pre-qual meeting has several aims:

- Like all Committee Meetings, the student's progress is evaluated, and constructive advice is provided about the project.
- The student's capability of successfully completing the PhD program is evaluated and they are advised accordingly.
- The student is provided with useful feedback on what to put into the reclass/qual proposal, and what areas should be studied.

Compared to previous meetings, the student's background knowledge and their ability to think scientifically will be probed more deeply to ascertain the likelihood of success at the Reclass/Qual Exam. At the end of the meeting, the Committee will recommend a course of action to the student. In rare cases, the Committee will recommend that the student not proceed with the exam. However, provided that at the Pre-Reclass/Qual Meeting, the student does not receive an overall score of "Unsatisfactory (Fail)" for the second time in a row on their meeting evaluation, the final decision as to whether to proceed with the exam is the student's. The decision not to follow the Committee's advice should only be made after reflection and consultation with the student's Supervisor (and if need be, the Graduate Coordinator). A decision by the student to proceed with the exam, despite advice to the contrary, would be made after the conclusion of the meeting, but by the deadline to submit exam details to the department.

The pre-reclassification/pre-qualification Committee will be composed of the regular Supervisory Committee and an Exam Chair, assigned by the Graduate Program Coordinator, based on the student's primary or secondary research field. To facilitate this assignment, students will be asked to provide meeting details to the department **by February 1**.

The pre-reclassification/pre-qualification meeting is conducted in the same manner as other Committee Meetings, though it may include an element of practice for the exam, such as more emphasis on answering questions. Students should discuss with their supervisor what to expect at this meeting. The student prepares a Committee Meeting report in the same manner as in all other Committee Meetings. However, one additional page must be added to the report containing an outline of the reclassification/qualification proposal. The outline should also be covered at the end of the student's presentation during the meeting, and the feasibility of the proposal will be

discussed. Committee members will then provide advice about the scope and aims of the project that may be helpful in crafting and defending the proposal. It is strongly recommended that students keep notes on the advice and questions asked to guide their exam preparation.

If the student is proceeding to the Reclass/Qual Exam, they should immediately work with their committee to identify a time for the exam, which must occur by the end of May (September for Jan. starts). As outlined in the [Examinations section](#), only one Supervisory Committee member is required to attend. Students will be required to submit their examination date, time, and committee composition **by April 1st** so that they can be assigned an Exam Chair and Designated Examiner—typically, the Exam Chair carries over from the pre-reclass/pre-qual meeting.

Occasionally, students will hold a pre-reclassification meeting and decide not to proceed to the Reclassification Exam. If this is the case, the student should prepare a [time-to-completion outline](#) (proposed thesis outline and six-month timeline of remaining experiments) for discussion and review by their committee, then hold their next meeting (ideally [Terminal](#)) within the next six months.

PhD track: Reclassification/Qualification Exam

Month 21: By the end of May of 2nd year (Sept for Jan. starts)

See the [Examinations section](#) for information about these exams.

PhD track: Fourth Meeting

By the end of June of 3rd year (Oct for Jan. starts)

Committee meetings after reclassification/qualification must be held at least once per year or more often if requested by the Supervisory Committee or the student. The next meeting after the reclassification/qualification exam should take place within one year of the exam; however, since May exams can lead to scheduling challenges, students are strongly encouraged to hold their fourth meeting earlier and establish their yearly pattern in a different month.

PhD track: Time to Completion Meeting

By the end of June of 4th year (Oct for Jan. starts) and at least yearly moving forward

The Department has put in place policies and procedures designed to reduce the time to completion of our PhD program. Specifically, it is expected that, except in unusual circumstances, a PhD should be defended no more than 5.5 to 6.0 years after commencing graduate studies in the Department.

The Time to Completion (TTC) Committee Meeting is designed to assist in ensuring timely completion of the PhD. **Before the end of the 4th year in the graduate program, every PhD student must have a TTC Meeting.** This meeting is not to be delayed because the student or Supervisor do not think the student is ready. Just like the Pre-Reclass/Qual Meeting, this meeting is held at a particular point in the program and is an important assessment of the progress already made as well as what is realistic for the completion of the PhD. It is also a mechanism for students to obtain documented agreement from their Supervisor and Committee about how much more work is expected in their thesis.

The TTC Meeting is conducted in the same manner as other Committee Meetings with the following additional measures:

- 1) The student is given the opportunity to discuss their career plans with the Committee and get their advice on how to achieve their career goals. This is optional, and the student can decline to have this discussion.
- 2) In both the written progress report and at the TTC Meeting, the student must present an additional section including:
 - (i) A projected thesis outline. Students can use the [SGS thesis template](#) as a framework to populate the required sections, noting progress towards each.
 - (ii) A plan outlining exactly which experiments need to be completed along with a realistic estimate of how long this is expected to take. This time may not exceed two years (i.e., except for writing and defending the thesis, all other aspects should be completed within 5.0 to 5.5 years). This should consider pitfalls and alternatives, with 'go/no-go' decision points on specific timelines.

This section can be beyond the four-page report length. There is no required length, but more detail can allow a more productive and specific discussion, as well as a more comprehensive record of what plans were agreed upon. Students are encouraged to consult their Supervisors in preparing this section.

- 3) The Committee reviews the plan and either approves it or recommends modifications. This approval and any feedback are recorded in the evaluation.
- 4) The Committee discusses when to have the next Committee Meeting, which must take place within a year, though Committees are encouraged to consider an earlier meeting.
- 5) All subsequent meetings, held at least yearly until the Terminal, must include a TTC focus: reports should include the section outlined in step 2, with a thesis outline and a plan for completing the remaining experiments, and these should be explicitly presented and discussed for approval by the Committee.
- 6) A Terminal Committee Meeting is held once experiments are complete, in which the student is given permission to write the thesis. This should be no more than 2 years after the initial TTC meeting.

Yearly Committee Meetings are an absolute, non-negotiable requirement of our program and the School of Graduate Studies. A student who does not have Committee Meetings each year may not be able to register in the fall and may have their funding or enrollment in the Department terminated. Extensions to the SGS time limit of seven years for the total duration of a PhD will be given only for rare extenuating circumstances.

MSc & PhD: Terminal Meeting

MSc: Aim for September of 3rd year

PhD: Aim for June of 5th-6th year

At the Terminal Committee Meeting, a detailed outline of the proposed thesis (generally in point form and 1-2 pages in length) is presented. It is recommended to also include goal dates for when different sections will be written (noting what is already written). The detailed outline should also be included in the student's Committee Meeting progress report that is distributed to Supervisory Committee members ahead of the Terminal Committee Meeting. Students should be prepared to discuss the timeline for when the complete thesis draft will be provided to the supervisor and committee for review, as it's important to make sure that they are available during

these periods, especially when they fall around holidays. See the [Examinations section](#) for full details of timelines.

This meeting is evaluated with a single overall score.

The student will receive permission to shift to full-time writing the thesis at the Terminal Meeting, via the regular [Committee Meeting Evaluation Form](#) (a separate pdf is no longer used). Students may begin writing parts of their thesis at any time during their degree, but ‘permission to write’ denotes the point after which no further experimental work should be conducted until the thesis has been submitted to the exam committee. Should experimental work not be completed by the time of the Terminal Meeting, students must present a concise timeline to complete experiments within the next six weeks. The Committee can then post-date permission to write up to six weeks after the meeting. If experiments take longer than six weeks, another Terminal Committee Meeting must be scheduled by the student upon completion of all experiments.

After receiving permission to write, funded PhD students are given six months of further stipend coverage and are expected to defend within that period; MSc students are given four months. If delays are anticipated beyond this timeline, students must discuss with their supervisors; if the timeline is delayed to the extent that a complete draft isn’t provided by the end of the six/four-month writing/defence period, a Thesis Writing Meeting should be held (see below).

If supervisors expect any additional experimental work during the writing period, the student should be entitled to a corresponding extension of the period of stipend coverage.

Further information about the timelines for the writing and defence period is found in the [Examinations section](#).

MSc & PhD: Thesis Writing (‘Post-Terminal’) Meeting

If the supervisor has not received a complete thesis draft by:

- **MSc: 4 months after permission to write**
- **PhD: 6 months after permission to write**

In general, it is expected that the Terminal Meeting will be the final committee meeting in a student’s degree. However, if the thesis is not completed on time and the writing period is extended, students are required to hold a Thesis Writing meeting.

At this meeting, a full report is not required. Instead, students should submit an updated version of the thesis outline prepared for the terminal, elaborated and annotated to indicate:

- which sections and subsections have been fully written, which are in progress, and which have yet to be written, and
- when any incomplete sections will be finished.

The meeting can be shorter than a typical committee meeting, and a full presentation is likewise not required, though it can be helpful to prepare slides of the thesis outline or any other material that would support a discussion. The student and committee should discuss:

- Writing progress so far

- Barriers and challenges that have arisen in writing
- Possible changes to writing practices or additional supports that the student could access (e.g., more frequent sharing of drafts or meetings with the supervisor, meeting with the Learning Strategist)
- An updated timeline for thesis completion and expected defence date.

This meeting is evaluated with a single overall score.

Meetings for Students Doing Science Outside U of T

A student's thesis research might occasionally require them to do work at a site outside of Toronto for an extended period of time (e.g., field work, work at a company, work at another University). For work that requires the student to be away from Toronto for more than a month, the student must schedule a Committee Meeting **before** committing to that work in order to get the Committee's approval. The student must also fill out the [SGS Off-Campus Registration Form](#) (found on the [SGS website](#)) and have them signed by the Graduate Coordinator **prior to** committing to the work outside of Toronto. If the work takes place outside of Canada, they should also complete [Safety Abroad Requirements](#).

Lack of Sufficient Progress

If a student's overall progress or performance in the program is deemed to be insufficient by the Supervisory Committee, they will receive an Overall Score of "Unsatisfactory (Fail)" on their Supervisory Committee Meeting Evaluation Report. This report must include a specific description of the problems and how the student may improve their performance.

A student receiving an overall score of "Unsatisfactory (Fail)" must have another Committee Meeting in less than 3 months. An additional member of the Graduate Team, Executive Committee, or Designated Examiners may be added at this next meeting to assess the situation. This is determined by the Graduate Coordinator on a case-by-case basis. Per SGS regulations, if the student does not attain an overall grade above "Unsatisfactory (Fail)" at this next Committee Meeting, the student may be asked to withdraw from the program. If the student is permitted to stay in the program at this point, strict conditions will be established in consultation with the Committee and the Graduate Coordinator to ensure that progress is closely monitored.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

ESSENTIALS: Curriculum Overview

There have been two curriculum updates in the past decade. With some exceptions in 2019, most updates did not change the actual requirements, but simply how different requirements are grouped under course codes on your transcript, to make program requirements more transparent. You are only responsible for knowing and completing the requirements for your start date.

			Curriculum (Your Start Date)		
Deg	Yr	Requirement	Current (Sept 2021-present)	Core (Sept 2019-Jan 2021)	Legacy (up to Jan 2019)
MSc + PhD	1	Core Course	• MMG1001	• MMG1001	N/A
	1	Colloquium	• MMG1003	• MMG1002	• MMG1010
	1	Computational	• MMG1004 or MMG1344+1345		N/A
	2	Presentation Skills	• MMG1113	• MMG1011	• MMG1015
	2	2nd-year Presentation	• MMG1114	• MMG1021	
	1-2	Seminar Attendance	• 2 terms of MMG1112 • 2 terms of MMG1111		
PhD	4	4th-year Presentation	• MMG1115	• MMG1031 <i>(The presentation may have occurred in Year 5)</i>	• MMG1017 <i>(The presentation may have occurred in Year 5)</i>
	3-4	Seminar Attendance	• 2 more terms of MMG1112 • 2 more terms of MMG1111		
	2-4	Topic Courses	Graded under their own course codes: • Topic Course 1 • Topic Course 2 (if you took MMG1345, this counts as one)	Graded under MMG1041: • Topic Course 1 • Topic Course 2	Graded under MMG1012: • Topic Course 1 • Topic Course 2 Graded under MMG1016: • Topic Course 3 • Topic Course 4 Graded under MMG1017 (above): • Topic Course 5

The placeholder course RST9999 should also appear on your transcript in every registered term to represent your thesis work.

Students who complete an MSc and are then readmitted to the PhD will only complete the “PhD” section during that degree.

To proceed to the reclassification or qualification exam, all courses in the “MSc + PhD” section must be complete with a passing grade or enrolled with sufficient progress (e.g., enough seminars must have been attended so far that attendance requirements can be met by the end of the term).

Course Details

Course timings, instructors, and updated descriptions are posted each year on the [Course Descriptions page](#).

Core Course

1st-year Fall term

Current Curriculum: MMG1001H - Foundational Genetic Approaches I (0.5 FCE)

Core Curriculum: MMG1001H - Foundational Genetic Approaches I (0.5 FCE)

Legacy Curriculum: N/A

This is the introductory course, intended to provide a fundamental background in key areas, across three five-week core modules:

1. Genetics
2. Genomics
3. Proteomics

Each module will have its own assignments and format. Marks achieved in each module will be used to calculate the final grade.

Colloquium

1st-year Winter term

Current Curriculum: MMG1003H - First Year Colloquium (0.25 FCE)

Core Curriculum: Part of MMG1002H - Foundational Genetic Approaches II (0.5 FCE)

Legacy Curriculum: MMG1010H - Molecular Genetics Colloquium (0.5 FCE)

The Colloquium consists of ~ten weekly departmental seminars by invited world-class scientists. The seminars are open to the entire department and run on Monday afternoons in the winter term. In advance of the seminar, students read a research paper and a review recommended by the invited seminar speaker. On the preceding Wednesday, students meet in small groups of 10-15 members to discuss the research paper and develop a set of questions to submit to the seminar speaker. After attending the seminar, students meet with the seminar speaker as a class to discuss the research. This course provides first-year graduate students with the opportunity to develop important skills in evaluating scientific research while learning about a broad range of research areas from experts in each field.

Computational Course(s)

1st-year Winter term (scheduled into Summer term)

Current Curriculum:

- MMG1004H - A Practical Course in Programming for Biologists (0.25 FCE), OR
- MMG1344H+MMG1345H - Foundational Computational Biology I+II (0.25+0.25 FCE)

Core Curriculum: Part of MMG1002H - Foundational Genetic Approaches II (0.5 FCE)

Legacy Curriculum: N/A

Each computational offering is a six-week course of instruction in concepts and application in computational biology, tailored to different levels of experience.

- Non-CBMG students are by default enrolled in MMG1004H
 - Non-CBMG students who do have advanced computational training may request to enrol in MMG1344H and MMG1345H instead of MMG1004H, pending review of their experience by the instructors
 - Non-CBMG students who complete MMG1004H may also take MMG1344H and/or MMG1345H later in their degrees
- Students in the CBMG stream are enrolled in MMG1344H and MMG1345H

Any computational coursework taken beyond 0.25 FCE counts towards fulfilment of topic course requirements:

- For CBMG students, MMG1345H will count towards one topic course requirement, and only one further topic course is required
- For non-CBMG students who are permitted to take MMG1344H and MMG1345H instead of MMG1004H, the same applies
- For non-CBMG students who take MMG1004H and then later take both MMG1344H and MMG1345H, the two latter courses will fulfil both topic course requirements

Presentation Skills (aka 'Small Group Seminars')

2nd-year Fall term

Current Curriculum: MMG1113H - MSc Presentation Skills (0.25 FCE)

Core Curriculum: Part of MMG1011H - Student Seminars I (0.5 FCE)

Legacy Curriculum: Part of MMG1015Y - Seminar (1.0 FCE)

This course entails a seminar presentation in front of a small group of students (~15) and professors (2). At the first meeting of the series, the course coordinator will give a seminar highlighting some of the specific challenges encountered by the types of data and arguments frequently presented in molecular biology seminars. The coordinator and the students will identify commonly made mistakes and discuss ways to avoid them.

In subsequent weeks, students will meet in small groups of ~15 students. **Attendance at every session is mandatory.** Each week, 3 or 4 students will present a 15-minute seminar based on their current graduate research and critique the seminars of others. Two professors will also be in the room to help organize, encourage discussion, and evaluate the presentations. Each presenter will be given a set time, uninterrupted, to present the seminar. After the seminar, a typical critique session consists of the presenter running through their presentation again (slide-by-slide), with comments and constructive suggestions from the evaluators (initially the students, then the faculty) being provided at appropriate places. The group will try to identify what makes a “good” slide “good” and how to revise and improve the less effective slides. It is expected that opinions will vary among evaluators, and it will be helpful for everyone to hear a range of opinions.

For each seminar, each evaluator will provide written feedback on the form provided. This feedback will be provided anonymously to the presenter to help them revise their seminar for presentation to the department in the following academic term.

2nd-Year Presentation (aka ‘MSc Presentation’)

2nd-year Winter term

Current Curriculum: MMG1114H - MSc Presentation (0.25 FCE)

Core Curriculum: Part of MMG1021H - Student Seminars II (0.5 FCE)

Legacy Curriculum: Part of MMG1015Y - Seminar (1.0 FCE)

The primary goal of the Student Seminar Courses is providing practical experience and guidance so that students can concisely communicate their research results to an audience of educated, but not necessarily specialist, peers. This is an essential skill for anyone intending to seek a career in scientific research and related areas. A secondary goal is to give each student a broad knowledge of all aspects of research undertaken in the department. A tertiary goal is to provide students with experience listening to scientific seminars and constructively critiquing others’ research.

This course is the **MSc/PhD second-year student** seminar presentation. The primary purpose of this course is to give students experience in presenting their research to a larger audience of their peers. Students will present their seminars in the 2nd year of their graduate program. Completion of this course is mandatory for all graduate students in the program.

Supervisors are expected to attend their students’ presentations unless they are on leave; students are expected to sign up for their presentations after coordinating schedules with their supervisors. Committee members are strongly encouraged to attend. Presentations may not be recorded or streamed.

Following the seminar presentations, faculty members and students scheduled to speak in a given academic year will critique each seminar speaker. This feedback is intended to help presenters identify their strong and weak points, to improve future seminars and to provide feedback on the research project. Public questions after each presentation should focus on scientific content and clarification of details in the presentation. The post-seminar period is intended for constructive comments on the speaker’s presentation skills. The instructor will limit non-productive comments.

4th-Year Presentation (aka ‘PhD Presentation’)

4th-year Fall term – PhD only (*Core and Legacy presentations could take place in 5th year*)

Current Curriculum: MMG1115H - PhD Student Presentations (0.50 FCE)

Core Curriculum: Part of MMG1031Y - Student Seminars III (1.0 FCE)

Legacy Curriculum: Part of MMG1017H - Topics in Molecular Genetics III (0.5 FCE)

This is the **PhD student** seminar presentation. The primary purpose of this is to give students additional experience in presenting their research in greater depth to a larger audience of their peers. Students will present a seminar in their 4th year of the PhD program. Completion of this course is mandatory for all PhD students in the program.

Supervisors are expected to attend their students' presentations unless they are on leave; students are expected to sign up for their presentations after coordinating schedules with their supervisors. Committee members are strongly encouraged to attend. Presentations may not be recorded or streamed. Post-presentation critique follows the same expectations as the 2nd-year presentation.

Seminar Attendance

1st & 2nd Year, Fall and Winter terms

Current Curriculum:

- **Fall: MMG1112H - Graduate Seminars II (0.0 FCE CR/NCR)**
- **Winter: MMG1111H - Graduate Seminars I (0.0 FCE CR/NCR)**

Core Curriculum: Part of MMG1021H - Student Seminars II (0.5 FCE)

Legacy Curriculum: Part of MMG1015Y - Seminar (1.0 FCE)

3rd & 4th Year, Fall and Winter terms – PhD only

Current Curriculum:

- **Fall: MMG1112H - Graduate Seminars II (0.0 FCE CR/NCR)**
- **Winter: MMG1111H - Graduate Seminars I (0.0 FCE CR/NCR)**

Core Curriculum: Part of MMG1031Y - Student Seminars III (1.0 FCE)

Legacy Curriculum: Part of MMG1017H - Topics in Molecular Genetics III (0.5 FCE)

These courses capture attendance at the weekly student seminars (peers presenting in the 2nd-year and 4th-year presentation courses). Students enrolled in the attendance courses (all 1st- and 2nd-year students, and 3rd- and 4th-year PhD students) are required to attend and evaluate 18 individual seminar presentations per term enrolled (4 total terms for MSc, 8 total terms for PhD). To receive credit for attending a session, evaluations must be completed via a Quercus page that students will receive an invitation to.

Under the Current Curriculum, to receive course credit for MMG1112H & MMG1111H and proceed in the program, you must meet full attendance requirements in *every* enrolled term. If extenuating circumstances impact your ability to attend and evaluate sufficient seminars, you are urged to contact the course coordinator as early as possible. Significant shortfall in attendance constitutes a failure to meet program requirements, and may result in being unable to proceed to the reclassification or qualification exam, or put continued standing in the program at risk.

If you fall short of requirements, you will generally be required to attend a number of make-up sessions on top of baseline requirements, typically calculated as 1.5x the number of missed sessions, rounded up. These make-up sessions should be completed as soon as is feasible, and must be completed before you can receive course credit and fulfil this graduation requirement.

(For Core and Legacy Curricula, attendance was a component of the same umbrella courses that included presentations, and both attendance and presentation performance contributed to the grade for those courses.)

The mandatory seminars attendance requirement reflects the importance the department places on training students in the skill of communicating research results and in receiving a comprehensive education in the broader field of Molecular Genetics.

Presentations may not be recorded or streamed.

Topic Courses

By Winter of 4th Year – PhD only

Current Curriculum: 2 required, each with their own course code (0.25 FCE each)

Core Curriculum: 2 required, graded under MMG1041H - Topics in Molecular Genetics II (0.5 FCE)

Legacy Curriculum: 5 required, graded under MMG1012H - Topics in Molecular Genetics I (0.5 FCE), MMG1016H - Topics in Molecular Genetics II (0.5 FCE), and part of MMG1017 - Topics in Molecular Genetics III (0.5 FCE)

Topic courses are modular courses, with most topics lasting for six weeks with one 2-hour session each week (i.e., 12 total hours in-class). In-class sessions generally include lectures by professors and presentations by students on current literature. Classes often involve discussion of research papers and usually are evaluated through assignments and class participation. Marks should be available within four weeks after the due date of the last assignment for the course.

Current and Core Curriculum PhD students are required to take two topic courses; Legacy Curriculum PhD students were required to take five. These courses should be completed by the end of fourth year of a PhD (by the end of second year for PhD students who already completed an MSc in our department). If this is not possible, students must discuss with the Learning Strategist and complete SGS paperwork.

MMG1344H and MMG1345H computational courses can also fulfil topic course requirements, as [outlined above](#). One topic course requirement (up to 0.25 FCE) may also be fulfilled by taking an approved graduate course from another department. Students may submit a proposed replacement course for approval via the [Topic Course Replacement Form](#).

Topic courses are intended to be taken after the reclassification/qualification exam but may be taken earlier if needed. However, note that taking topic courses in first year is strongly discouraged, especially in the first semester, as students should prioritize rotations and settling into final labs. MSc students are not required to take topic courses but may choose to.

Possible topic course selections should be discussed with supervisors and committees. Most courses are offered every two years, and so students are encouraged to monitor offerings each year to be able to take courses of maximum interest. Offerings for the year will be posted on the [departmental website](#), typically towards the end of summer and announced via email. Students will then typically enrol via ACORN.

Failing a Course

The School of Graduate Studies requires students to complete all of their graduate courses with at least a B- or 70% grade. Failure to achieve a mark of 70% or greater in any required course may result in the termination of the student's enrollment in the program. If a student fails a core course, they can be asked to leave the Department. If they fail a topic course, they may be asked to do a makeup assignment or take another topic course. In both cases, the Graduate

Coordinator(s) will discuss the situation with the Course Coordinator and will also meet with the Supervisor to review overall progress in the program. The student may also be asked to hold a Supervisory Committee Meeting involving a Graduate Coordinator. If a course is repeated, the School of Graduate Studies requires that both the grade in the failed course and the grade in the repeated course be recorded on the student's transcript.

Courses Offered by Other Departments

As described above, one graduate course from another department may be taken to count towards topic course requirements, with approval. Further graduate courses relevant to the degree may be taken with supervisory approval, but will not count towards degree requirements. Students may also take undergraduate courses relevant to their degree at the University of Toronto free of charge, with supervisory approval, though they cannot be used towards degree requirements.

Students taking courses in other departments must follow the course enrolment procedures of the host department, but will in many cases need to involve Molecular Genetics administration to complete enrolment.

In rare instances, students may ask for permission to take courses outside of the Department in preparation for a future degree. These requests are considered on a case-by-case basis, but are generally not approved. This is because during a student's time in the program, the student should be focused on their research and Molecular Genetics coursework, and every effort should be made to eliminate additional time commitments and distractions that would contribute to a longer time spent in the program.

Graduate Research Integrity Workshop

All incoming students (from the Fall 2023 cohort onward) are required to complete the [Graduate Research Integrity Workshop](#), offered by Research, Innovation & Health Science Education (RIHSE). This workshop addresses research integrity issues that may arise in the course of a degree and career in science, including research misconduct, authorship disputes, and image manipulation. The format and timing of the workshop will be published on the [RIHSE page](#) and communicated to students. All incoming students will be automatically enrolled in the workshop, and completion will be monitored by the department.

EXAMINATIONS

ESSENTIALS

Reclass/Qual

- Reclass/qual exams take place in May of 2nd year (Sept for Jan starts), and students must have made [sufficient course progress](#) to be eligible.
- The exam proposal has [firm length limits and a suggested organization](#).
- [Students are responsible for](#) arranging the date, time, and External Examiner for their exam, then submitting the exam details via form to the department by the deadline, so that the department can arrange the Exam Chair and Designated Examiner.
- The exam involves a [two-hour process](#), with several [possible outcomes](#).

MSc Oral Exam (Defence)

- There is a specific post-Terminal [timeline for writing and arranging the defence](#).
- There is recommended [organization](#) and [formatting](#) for the thesis.
- The student and supervisor are responsible for arranging the [defence exam committee](#).
- There are processes for handling delays from the [student](#) or [supervisor/committee](#).
- The exam involves a [two-hour process](#), including [voting](#).
- After the defence, students must make any required corrections and [upload their thesis to ProQuest](#) to complete their degrees.
- Students may request to have their MSc defence evaluated for a [recommendation of readmission to the PhD program](#) and possible waiver of the qualification exam, if eligible.

PhD Oral Exam (Defence)

- There is a specific post-Terminal [timeline for writing and arranging the defence](#).
- There is recommended [organization](#) and [formatting](#) for the thesis.
- The student and supervisor are responsible for arranging the [defence exam committee](#).
- There are processes for handling delays from the [student](#) or [supervisor/committee](#).
- The exam involves a [three-hour process](#), including [voting](#).
- After the defence, students must make any required corrections and [upload their thesis to ProQuest](#) to complete their degrees.

Reclassification/Qualification Exam

Reclassification exams are for students who wish to transfer directly from the MSc program to the PhD program without completing an MSc thesis.

Qualification exams ensure that students who have entered the PhD program directly successfully prepare and defend an original research proposal leading to a PhD degree. It also tests a student's general scientific knowledge and technical skills. Students who have successfully defended an MSc in the Department and who have been admitted into the PhD program can be exempted from this exam if they continue on the same project and if they had an exemplary MSc defence (see below).

Timeline & Eligibility

Reclassification/qualification exams will be held during May of the 2nd year of studies, for students who started their program in September or during October of the 2nd year of studies, for students who started their program in January.

All proposals will be handed in by May 1 at 5:00 pm (October 1 for January admits). These deadlines are absolute.

To reclassify or qualify, students must have:

1. completed and received an acceptable mark in MMG1001 and MMG1003 as well as MMG1004 or equivalent* (determined by UofT, currently 70% or higher).
*Note that CBMG students will need an acceptable mark in MMG1344 and MMG1345 in lieu of MMG1004.
2. attended and evaluated the requisite number of seminars in MMG1111 and MMG1112 in year 1 and have attended enough seminars in year 2 to still be eligible to meet the requirements for attendance and evaluations for both MMG1111 and MMG1112.
3. completed and received an acceptable mark (determined by UofT, currently 70% or higher) in MMG1113.
4. have completed or be scheduled to complete Graduate Student Presentation I MMG1114.

No Topic Courses are required prior to qualification/reclassification. Note that these course codes are the requirements for the Current Curriculum; students in earlier curricula were required to complete [equivalent requirements under different course codes](#).

Proposal Preparation

Students are required to prepare a proposal describing the research that they intend to carry out during their PhD program. The proposal text should be a maximum of 12 double-spaced (23 lines per page) pages with 2 cm margins and 12-point font. Figures, tables, and references on additional pages are allowed, and the page limit will be strictly enforced. Failure to adhere to the page limits or handing in the proposal past the due date will result in a failing mark in this part of the exam evaluation.

Proposals must include some background information pertaining to the project and clearly identify the primary objectives of the work. In addition, the student must describe the experimental methods to be employed and their possible limitations. The recommended organization for the proposal is as follows:

- **Abstract:** A 250-word summary of the proposal (not included within the 12-page limit).
- **Introduction** (3 pages): The relevant background of the project. What is known about the system, and what is not known? What are the open questions in the field?
- **Relevant experimental progress** (3-4 pages): The relevant work completed so far by the student. A brief mention of other relevant work done in the laboratory by others that has led to choosing this particular project may also be required to put the proposal into proper context.

- **Rationale** (0.5-1 page): What key question(s) are being addressed? Why has the student chosen to address this question using this particular system? What is the hypothesis or hypotheses to be tested?
- **Specific aims** (4-5 pages): The student describes the specific experiments they intend to carry out during their PhD studies. The purpose of the experiments with respect to the general rationale (part 2) should be made clear. The student should point out possible pitfalls in the experimental design and should suggest alternative approaches. Generally, the student should describe two to three distinct aims. Possible outcomes of the experiments, and how to proceed given these outcomes, should be discussed. Convince the Exam Committee that the experiments are feasible and will produce relevant and significant data.
- **Summary & Potential Impact on the Field (~0.5 pages).**

The student is to write the proposal. Supervisors and other members of the Supervisory Committee are advised to not provide word-by-word feedback or rewriting, but only to ensure that the quality of scientific writing, data figures and legends, and referencing is suitable.

It is strongly recommended that students spend four weeks in April to prepare the proposal and study for this exam. Supervisors should not pressure students to do experiments during this period, though students should anticipate that lab maintenance tasks (e.g., maintaining cell lines or organisms) may continue. It is also recommended that students obtain example proposal from other students in their topic area and within their lab who recently successfully completed the exam.

Responsibilities Prior to the Exam

- The student must have held a [pre-exam meeting](#), with an Exam Chair assigned by the department after the student submitted their meeting details to the department by February 1 (June 1 for January starts).
- The student must write the proposal and prepare for the exam.
- The Supervisor may not require a student to perform experiments during the four-week preparation period.
- At the end of the pre-reclassification/pre-qualification meeting, the student, Supervisor, and Supervisory Committee must schedule the date and time of the exam in May.
- The student and Supervisor must select and invite the External Examiner to the exam they have scheduled.
- The student and Supervisor must schedule the room for the exam at the date/time established.
- The student must notify the department of the date, time, room, External Examiner, and Supervisory Committee Members who will be in attendance at the exam. This is submitted via a form (emailed ahead of exams) due by April 1 (Sept. 1).
- The Graduate Program Coordinator will schedule the Designated Examiner and the Chair in the time slot provided by each student. **The department will not make exam arrangements if the form is not submitted by the deadline.**
- The student must distribute the proposal to the reclassification/qualification exam committee by May 1 (Oct. 1) at 5:00 or one week earlier than the exam, if the exam is scheduled within the first week of May (Oct.).

- The student is recommended to bring the voting ballots to the exam for all Committee members, along with a single copy of the proposal.

Reclassification/Qualification Exam Quorum

The composition of the exam committee is as follows (normally 6 members in total):

1. An Exam Chair, who is assigned by the Department. The Exam Chair who served on the pre-reclass/pre-qual meeting will be carried over if the student indicates that they've confirmed their availability. A Supervisory Committee Member who is also an Examiner cannot fulfill this role.
2. Designated Examiner (see "[Organizational Structure](#)"). Assigned by the Department based on the student's primary research field. A Supervisory Committee Member who is also an Examiner cannot fulfill this role.
3. External Committee member (an arm's length U of T faculty member from outside or within the Department). Selected by the student and Supervisor.
4. Supervisory Committee members (usually 2); quorum requires at least one Committee member aside from the Supervisor to be present.
5. Supervisor. (If there are Co-Supervisors, only one of the two is required to be present, but both may attend and vote.)

A minimum of five exam committee members must be present for the exam to proceed, including:

- The Supervisor
- The Exam Chair
- The Designated Examiner
- The External Committee Member
- At least one Supervisory Committee Member who is not the Supervisor.

The five members must have read the complete proposal before the exam begins and must be at the examination for its entirety, including the student's oral presentation. All Supervisory Committee members should attend if possible, but if absolutely necessary due to scheduling problems, an exam may be scheduled knowing that only one regular Supervisory Committee member is able to attend.

Note that all reclassification/qualification Exam Committee Members must have an arm's-length relationship with the student and their work. For example, Professors with whom the student has had collaborations during their graduate studies in our Department are not allowed to serve as Designated Examiner or External Committee Member for the respective reclassification or qualification exam. If the assigned Designated Examiner or Exam Chair do not have an arm's-length relationship, the student is responsible for notifying the Graduate Program Coordinator.

The Examination

1. The student may be asked to briefly leave the room. After this, the examination will commence with the student's uninterrupted oral presentation of their proposal (no more than 20 minutes in length).
2. The Exam Committee then uses the Socratic method to question the student on their knowledge of technical and theoretical matters related to their proposal, and to their

general knowledge of the research area. This usually entails one round of questions by most of the Committee and a second, shorter round of questions. The examination, including the oral presentation, should not exceed 90 minutes, but leaves an additional 30 minutes for discussion (totaling 2 hours maximum).

3. The Exam Committee then has a closed-door discussion and votes on the reclassification/qualification. All Committee members including the Supervisor must vote. Abstentions are not permitted. Details of the reclassification/qualification exam evaluation can be found below.

Additional rules for the exam process:

- i. The Supervisor (and Co-Supervisor) are not allowed to ask new questions, but can ask clarifying questions, e.g., if a student did not properly understand a previous question.
- ii. In cases where the Chair's area of expertise does not overlap with that of the student being examined, the Chair is strongly encouraged to give their time over to members of the exam who are more knowledgeable in the subject area or are having an insightful conversation with the student during their first Q & A period.
- iii. The Chair will determine which examiners asks questions in round 2 of the Q& A session, placing emphasis on continuing insightful lines of inquiry and allowing questions from those who require additional information to determine pass/fail judgements.

The Graduate Program Coordinator will include copies of the appropriate ballots in the examination memo sent to the Examination Committee and student.

Evaluation of the Reclassification/Qualification Candidate

The exam is intended to probe the breadth and depth of the student's knowledge. The exam committee will evaluate the student and project in three general areas:

- **Feasibility:** If possible, PhD projects should be designed so that any outcome is likely to be of scientific interest and to form the basis of a thesis. In other words, if the results do not turn out as expected, the data might still have sufficient interest to be publishable and constitute the student's PhD thesis. In some cases, a student may wish to start on a risky project where only one outcome would be interesting. In this case, it is important to state why the payoff merits such a high-risk approach. The student should also state how long they will pursue this high-risk project before dropping it, and what criteria will be used to decide that the project cannot be done. In addition, feasible back-up projects should be proposed.
- **Understanding of the Project:** The student is expected to understand all the concepts associated with their proposed area of research. They should also have a thorough understanding of the literature in all aspects related to their proposed area of investigation.
- **Ability to function in a Research Environment:** The student must be able to collect interpretable data, understand the importance of controls, and design and execute internally consistent experiments. To this end, it is very important to include in the proposal information about the research that they have done during their time in the program. Even if this research is unrelated to what the student proposes to do for their PhD thesis, it nevertheless provides an opportunity for the Exam Committee to evaluate their competence in a research environment.

Evaluation of students at Reclassification and Qualification examinations has both objective and subjective components. Because of the latter and because the faculty members are evaluating both the student and the project, it is difficult to state unequivocally the weight to be given to each of the above components. The best way to ensure a positive outcome is to ascertain that one's proposal is feasible and to consider as many of the potential pitfalls as possible. Related to this point, advice on the outline of the proposal from the Supervisory Committee at the Pre-Reclassification/Pre-Qualification meeting is extremely useful. Students should also know the literature relevant to the proposed area of research. The best sources of information and help are the student's Supervisory Committee and senior students who have successfully defended a research proposal at this type of exam. It is extremely helpful to ask fellow students and post-doctoral fellows, especially those with research interests further afield from the research field of the reclassifying/qualifying student, to hold a mock exam prior to the actual exam.

Specific Procedure for Exam Evaluation

Prior to the exam, the Committee is likely to ask the student to briefly leave the room. Following the Oral Exam, the student will leave the room. Prior to any discussion, each examiner will evaluate the student in several different categories. The criteria for which specific marks are given and details of the exam evaluation can be found on the Reclassification or Qualification Exam Evaluation Forms. The Committee chair will collate the evaluations, present a summary to the Committee and determine the nature of the subsequent discussion. Once a decision has been reached, the student will be invited back, informed of the decision, and provided with constructive feedback. Copies of the evaluations will be made available to the student, but originals are returned by the Exam Chair to the Graduate Program Coordinator and will be kept in the student's file.

Failure of a reclassification exam will result in one of the following five outcomes (to be determined by the Exam Committee):

- The student must retake the oral exam within four to eight weeks without revision of the written proposal; or
- The student must submit a revised written proposal within four to eight weeks without retaking the oral exam; or
- The student must submit a revised written proposal and retake the oral exam within four to eight weeks; or
- The student is asked to remain in the MSc program; or
- The Department makes a recommendation to SGS for program termination.

Failure of a qualification exam will result in one of the following five outcomes (to be determined by the Exam Committee):

- The student must retake the oral exam within four to eight weeks without revision of the written proposal; or
- The student must submit a revised written proposal within four to eight weeks without retaking the oral exam; or
- The student must submit a revised written proposal and retake the oral exam within four to eight weeks; or
- The student is asked to transfer to the MSc program; or

- The Department makes a recommendation to SGS for program termination.

In the event that a student is unsuccessful at the second attempt (revised proposal and/or retake exam), one of the following two outcomes will be assigned:

- The student is asked to remain in/transfer to the MSc program; or
- The Department makes a recommendation to SGS for program termination.

In the situation of a failure, even if the student is given the option to retake the exam, they have the option to ultimately not proceed after discussion with the Supervisor and/or the Supervisory Committee. If the student changes their mind, they must let the Graduate Program Coordinator know as soon as the decision is made or at least two weeks before the rescheduled exam was to occur.

Transferring to the PhD Program

(For reclassifying students)

- The Exam Chair submits the evaluation forms to the Graduate Program Coordinator to be kept in the student's file.
- A copy of the forms is forwarded to the student for their information. The student must bring the evaluation forms to the next Supervisory Committee Meeting.
- If a student passes, they will be asked by the Graduate Program Coordinator to sign a "Program Transfer", which is then forwarded to the School of Graduate Studies for approval.
- The School of Graduate Studies notifies the student of a successful transfer in writing, and their new program will be reflected on ACORN as of the following academic year.

MSc Oral Exam (Defence)

When all course requirements have been met, the student has held a [Terminal meeting](#) and written a thesis, and the Supervisor has read and approved the thesis, the student may schedule an MSc Oral Exam. MSc Oral Exams should take place 2 to 2.5 years after first registration. This examination is a formal defence of a thesis based on original scientific research conducted in the Department as well as a test of the student's general scientific knowledge and abilities.

Requesting Permission to Write the MSc Thesis

Permission to write an MSc thesis is given at a [Terminal Committee Meeting](#). A detailed outline of the proposed thesis (generally in point form and 1-2 pages in length) is presented at this meeting. The detailed outline should also be included in the student's Committee Meeting progress report that is distributed to Supervisory Committee members at least seven days prior to the Terminal Committee Meeting via the regular meeting form. Note that Committee members can also post-date this form up to six weeks after the date of the Terminal Committee meeting should experiments be completed within that timeframe. If experiments take longer than six weeks, another Terminal Committee Meeting must be scheduled by the student upon completion of all experiments.

Students may begin writing parts of their thesis **at any time**, but after formal 'permission to write' is given, the student should be writing their thesis full-time and should not conduct additional experiments until the "Request to set up an MSc Oral Examination" form has been

completed by all relevant parties. If supervisors expect additional experimental work during the writing period, the student should be entitled to a corresponding extension of the period of stipend coverage.

Time Limits for Writing the MSc Thesis

Students must defend within **four months** of receiving permission to write:

1. Students have **2 - 2.5 months** to write the full initial draft (with a range based on how much time students set aside to make edits after Supervisor and Supervisory Committee review). Supervisors may differ as to whether they want to review the full draft all at once or to see different sections as completed, so a discussion is recommended.
2. After the full draft has been submitted to the Supervisor, they have up to two weeks to read and critique the thesis. The student then makes edits based on supervisory feedback.
3. The edited draft is then submitted to the Supervisory Committee, who has two weeks to read and critique the thesis. The student then makes edits based on committee feedback.
4. The [MSc Oral Exam Request form](#) must be submitted at least **three weeks** prior to the agreed-upon date of the examination. Note that final copies of the thesis are no longer required for this form, so the form can be submitted at any point after the Supervisor has approved the full thesis draft.
5. The final version of the thesis must be sent to the full Examination Committee at least **two weeks** prior to the examination.

Supervisors are required to pay students during the thesis writing and defense period for up to four months, provided the student has not taken another job. If a student has set up the exam within the required time frame, the stipend must be paid until both the Oral Exam and thesis revisions recommended by the Exam Committee have been completed.

If a full thesis draft hasn't been sent to the supervisor by **four months** after permission to write, then a [Thesis Writing committee meeting](#) should be held. If thesis writing is delayed such that the submission of the thesis and defense take longer than 4 months, continuation of the stipend is at the discretion of the Supervisor.

Organization and Content of the MSc Thesis

The thesis should describe the student's work. This is not the same as a publication describing the work (see below for details). Obtaining an MSc in our Department is not dependent on obtaining publications. Obtaining authorship on a publication, however, is encouraged. Many of our MSc students obtain first-author publications.

The Department strongly encourages students to obtain examples of theses from previous members of their lab. In addition, theses from previous students in the program can be found through the [How Can I Find a U of T Thesis](#) guide.

The fundamental requirement of the MSc is to generate publication-quality data that reaches a significant conclusion. The data might constitute only a portion of a complete paper. In other words, the student's work should culminate in at least a couple of publication-quality figures or tables that they produced themselves and can interpret on their own. The student should be able to propose detailed experiments for the future that are based on their work.

The thesis should be written in the first person (use of the pronoun “I”), as it describes the student’s individual work: experiments, rationale, hypotheses and conclusions.

- **Introduction:**

- Should provide the relevant background to the thesis work.
- Should not be a general survey of every topic touched upon by the work.
- Should clearly outline the state of knowledge in the field of the research and emphasize the outstanding questions in the field, especially those that are specifically addressed by the MSc research.
- Should end with a brief outline and rationale for the thesis research. The introduction should not exceed 15 pages.

- **Data Chapter:**

- Should describe the experiments performed by the student.
- The MSc thesis consists of one data chapter that contains enough data to reach a significant conclusion. These data should be of publication quality but do not need to be published.
- Work of collaborators may be included when this work is crucial for the understanding of the student’s own data. When work by collaborators is included, it should be clearly indicated which experiments were done by collaborators. In this case, there must be a general explanation on the cover page of each data chapter outlining the contributions, by experiment, from each person.
- Use “I” in the body of the chapter to describe the student’s experiments, and the name of the collaborator(s) (or “we”, if appropriate) to describe others’ experiments/data. The chapter must be written to emphasize the student’s own work.
- The introduction to a data chapter should not repeat material already presented in the general introduction of the thesis.
- **Figures and tables** not exceeding three pages in length (see the [note below](#) for instructions on how to present very large datasets) should be placed in the body of the chapter, on the page following their first introduction, and not in a separate section at the end of the chapter. Where possible, the legend should be on the same page as the displayed item. Aside from very large datasets or movies (see below), there should be no reference to supplemental materials/figures/tables; all relevant data should be presented in the results section of the data chapter. Sometimes, figures that have been copied into a thesis are of inadequate resolution. Please ensure that all figures within a thesis are at least 300 dpi.
- In no case is it permissible for a **published or unpublished manuscript to be used as a data chapter without some alteration**. Even in the case of a single author paper by the student, the introduction must be modified to avoid repetition with the thesis introductory chapter. The results section of the chapter will incorporate all supplementary materials as described above.
- If a study involves **Human Subjects**, a section in the materials section should be included indicating the study was approved by an Institutional Review Board (specify which), and that informed consent was obtained from all human subjects.

If a study involves vertebrate subjects, a section in the materials section should be included that indicates that all related protocols used were reviewed by the appropriate animal care board (specify which).

- The term 'data not shown' does not belong in a thesis. Arguments that rely on casual observation because no data was collected should not be present in a data chapter as this provides evidence of poor scientific method. Speculation based on casual observation is permissible within a concluding chapter, so long as it is clearly stated that the argument relies on casual observation and not on real data.
- **Concluding Chapter:**
 - Should begin with an overall summary of the thesis work explaining how the work has advanced the field.
 - Should refer to questions and hypotheses posed in the Introduction and explain how the research has solved (or maybe not solved) these problems.
 - The thesis should end by proposing several future investigations that could further address the key issues in the field.

Thesis Formatting

We strongly recommended that authors use an [SGS guide and thesis template](#). The template can be applied at any stage of the writing process, but using one early on will simplify writing and later PDF conversion. These templates are meant to assist with the formatting and production of a thesis but, whether or not the student uses an SGS template, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the thesis meets SGS formatting requirements.

Theses should follow the following formatting guidelines:

- **Font size:** Text must be a minimum of 12 points. A smaller font size may be used for graphs, formulas, and appendices.
- **Line spacing:** Text line spacing must be at least one-and-a-half spaces, except for the thesis abstract, which should be double-spaced. Single spacing may be used for long quoted passages and footnotes.
- **Footnotes and References:** The student and Supervisor must decide the form and location of footnotes and the presentation of references and bibliography. The preferred location for footnotes is either at the bottom of the page or at the end of the chapters to which they refer. The student should consult style manuals in conjunction with the Guidelines. For questions not answered in either the Guidelines or any style manual, we urge students to use their discretion and to maintain a consistent style.
- **Page and margin sizes:** The size of the pages should be 8 1/2" x 11" (21.5 cm x 28 cm), the text reading across the 8 1/2" (21.5 cm) dimension. The left-hand margin should be at least 1 1/4" (32 mm), and the remaining three margins should be at least 3/4" (20 mm) to the main text.
- **File format:** The thesis must be in PDF format and may also include supplementary files for multimedia, sound, video or HTML pages with embedded files. For specific information please see the [SGS Formatting guide](#).

Inclusion of Very Large Datasets, Movies, and References to Published Supplemental Materials

All data relevant to the MSc thesis must be included within the thesis and distributed to Supervisory and Examining Committee members for editing and evaluation purposes. It is not

acceptable to refer to online supplementary materials published by the student within the thesis. The University cannot rely on outside agencies to maintain the integrity of data that are directly relevant to the thesis.

Students must present figures and small tables (not exceeding three pages) within the appropriate data chapter. The appendix of the table should present display items that exceed three pages in length. If the student and Supervisor feel that the data within a very large table (more than ~10 pages) would be better presented in an electronic format, the student may include these data via physical storage appended to the thesis or provide a [permanent link](#) to a cloud storage file.

Students should present movies as a series of representative stills in the appropriate data chapter. They should also include the movie on physical storage appended to the thesis or sent as a permanent cloud storage link.

Scheduling the MSc Oral Exam

The Supervisor must approve the student's thesis prior to the online submission of the "MSc Exam Request" form (available on the Departmental [Forms and Links page](#)). Students will submit the form online once they have confirmed a date and time for the exam with all members of the Exam Committee. This request must be submitted **no less than three weeks prior to the exam**. The student or supervisor must also distribute a final copy of the thesis to each member of the Exam Committee (including the Supervisory Committee members) at least two weeks prior to the exam. Failure to do so may result in rescheduling of the exam.

In general, defences are expected to take place in person. However, the department will approve a remote/virtual defence under some circumstances; the student must discuss this request with a Graduate Coordinator before submitting the Exam Request.

Choosing the MSc Thesis Defence Exam Committee

The final composition of the Committee is subject to the Graduate Coordinator's approval. The Exam Committee is composed as follows:

- The student's **Supervisor** (voting member). The Supervisor may participate in the exam questioning and/or the discussion about the student.
- At least **one Supervisory Committee member** in addition to the Supervisor must be in attendance (voting member). Multiple Committee members are welcome to attend the exam but are not required to do so.
- A **Designated Examiner** from the student's **primary research field** (voting member), will chair the Exam Committee. They are also expected to read the thesis and participate in the examination of the student. (See [Designated Examiners](#) for Committee composition). This member is to be selected and invited by the student and Supervisor, and cannot be a member of the student's Supervisory Committee; they are expected to be arm's-length.
- One '**Arm's-Length Examiner**' (voting member). This faculty member must hold a graduate appointment in SGS and may be from within the Department of Molecular Genetics or from another department. This examiner should have an arms-length relationship to both the student and the Supervisor. This member is selected by the Supervisor and student.

The Graduate Program Coordinator will issue a formal exam notice to all parties concerned once the Exam Committee is approved by the department. A copy of the notice is kept in the student's file and recorded on the database. As noted above, the student is responsible for the distribution of the thesis. The student and Supervisor are also responsible for determining the time and place of the meeting.

Quorum will be:

- i) The Supervisor
- ii) The Designated Examiner
- iii) At least one Supervisory Committee member (other than the student's Supervisor); and
- iv) The Arm's-Length Examiner.

Delays in Holding the MSc Oral Exam

The Oral Exam itself should take place **within four months** of the date permission was given to write a thesis. If the writing timeline is delayed to the extent that a complete first draft has not been submitted to the supervisor by the four-month deadline, a [Thesis Writing Committee Meeting](#) should be held to discuss progress and establish a new timeline. (If the draft has been submitted on time, but the defence is delayed for other reasons such as scheduling logistics, no meeting is required.) The Graduate Coordinator may be involved as necessary.

At this meeting, continued provision of stipend support beyond the required four-month period should also be discussed. After the four-month period, continuation of the stipend is at the discretion of the Supervisor; **however**, a Supervisor may not withdraw a student's stipend without prior consultation with the Graduate Coordinator.

The former "Thesis Extension" form has been deprecated.

Delays in Feedback and Approval of the MSc Thesis

Since thesis writing and Committee feedback must be completed within a tight timeframe, Supervisors and Supervisory Committee members are obliged to read and provide feedback on the draft thesis promptly. Supervisors are expected to read and return MSc theses to their students in two weeks or less. Committee members are expected to read and return MSc theses with comments in two weeks or less. If students do not receive the corrected thesis within these time frames, they should contact their Supervisor or Committee member by email and obtain a revised deadline for finishing the corrections. If this subsequent deadline is unreasonable or if this deadline is not met, the student should report the situation to the Graduate Coordinator along with appropriate documentation. The Graduate Coordinator will take immediate measures to resolve the situation. It is important for the student to remember that the Graduate Coordinators are allies in facilitating the timely revision of the thesis.

Students are expected to incorporate recommended changes from the Supervisor and Committee Members before distributing the thesis to the External Examiner and other Exam Committee members. If there are disagreements between a Committee member and the student and/or Supervisor about the nature and/or extent of the changes to be made to the thesis, the Graduate Coordinator should be consulted. The Graduate Coordinator will decide on how to proceed. It is

important to note that this resolution process will not be influenced by prior unofficial arrangements of MSc Oral Exam dates (e.g. having agreed on a date with an External Examiner).

The Department will not tolerate excessive delays by faculty members in reading and approving theses. Offenders will be sanctioned and may lose their graduate appointments.

MSc Examination Process

Oral Presentation

- Up to 20 minutes in length.
- Uninterrupted presentation of thesis research, including a reasonable introduction, explanation of research aims and accomplishments, and conclusions. A broad description of future aims is acceptable, but should not be treated as future aims that the student themselves would execute. Note that the presentation strategy is different if the student intends to re-apply to the PhD program and work on the same project (see “[Defending an MSc With Subsequent Admission to the PhD Program](#)”).

Questions

- The Exam Committee will question the student on technical and theoretical knowledge related to the thesis, and to the student’s general knowledge of the research area. The exam, including the oral presentation, should not exceed 90 minutes, leaving an additional 30 minutes for discussion and deliberation by the Committee.

Exam Committee Discussion

- A closed-door discussion of the thesis and its defence.
- Decide on recommendations.

MSc Oral Exam Voting Procedure

All Committee members must vote by filling out and signing the MSc Oral Examination Voting Ballot (found on the [Forms and Links page](#)). Abstentions are not permitted, and two negative votes result in the failure of the exam. The student may be permitted to stage a second defence. If they fail the second defence or are refused a second defence, the department will terminate the student’s enrollment in the program, and the student will not obtain a degree.

If the thesis defence is deemed acceptable, the Committee decides whether:

1. The thesis is acceptable ‘as-is’, in its present form
2. The thesis requires ‘editorial corrections’. Editorial corrections involve typographical errors, errors in punctuation or problems in style; they must be correctable within one month. The Supervisor will inform the Candidate of the necessary corrections and must certify in writing to SGS (via our Graduate Program Coordinator) that the corrections have been made. Or
3. The thesis requires ‘minor revisions’. Minor revisions are more than changes in style and less than major changes in the thesis. A typical example of a minor modification is clarification of textual material or the qualification of research findings or conclusions. Minor modifications must be feasibly completed within three months. The Chair of the Examination Committee must appoint a supervising Subcommittee to be approved by the Examination Committee and a Convener is thus designated. The Convener of the Subcommittee shall report with a brief written statement the necessary minor revisions preferably before the Examination Committee disperses, but as soon after the

examination as possible and ensure that the Candidate, Supervisor, and SGS receives a copy of the statement (via our Graduate Program Coordinator). The Convener of the Subcommittee shall also within three months of the date of the examination report in writing to SGS and the Examination Chair the state of completion of the required minor modifications (via our Graduate Administrator).

The Chair of the MSc Oral Exam must submit a completed copy of the MSc Oral Examination Chair's Summary Form (also found on the [Forms and Links page](#)) to the Graduate Program Coordinator immediately after the conclusion of the exam, and the student will receive instructions from the Graduate Program Coordinator. After a successful defence and completing revisions, the Supervisor must notify the Graduate Program Coordinator in writing (by email) that the student has made all the recommended corrections to their thesis. Upon receipt of a report from the chair of the Exam Committee and the confirmation from the Supervisor, the student can upload their thesis as instructed and an "MSc Degree Recommendation" is sent to the School of Graduate Studies.

Post-Exam Thesis Preparation

Upon timely completion of the thesis revisions and obtaining written approval from the Supervisor, the student must prepare the thesis for submission to the School of Graduate Studies and the Department. The Supervisor also notifies the Grad Administrator that all revisions are finalized.

SGS has prepared guidelines outlining the regulations for the formatting and preparation of a thesis for electronic submission to the SGS (see [Thesis Formatting](#)). These guidelines, available on the [School of Graduate Studies website](#), must be strictly adhered to. SGS will inform the student of any additional completion requirements such as the payment of library fines, outstanding fees, etc.

Once approved by the Examining Committee, the student must electronically submit the thesis and the associated data to the School of Graduate Studies (SGS). Within one month of it being submitted to SGS, a PDF copy of the thesis must be sent to our Graduate Program Coordinator for archival purposes, including all additional large data sets as permanent links to cloud storage. The Department no longer requests a hard copy, though it's recommended that students create a copy for themselves, and some Supervisors may additionally require a copy. The U of T Bookstore offers [printing and binding services](#).

The degree is considered complete when the final thesis is uploaded to ProQuest.

Defending an MSc with Subsequent Admission to the PhD Program

Students completing an MSc who are interested in returning to undertake a PhD in the Department of Molecular Genetics can request to have their exam committee assess them for an admissions recommendation. Additionally, those who specifically intend to continue in the within the same laboratory on the same (or similar) project may further request a waiver of the qualification exam, if readmitted.

All students who wish to gain admission to the PhD program in the Department of Molecular Genetics following a successful MSc defence must submit an application via the SGS application system (see [Application Procedures](#)). It is important that the Graduate Coordinator and/or Graduate Program Coordinator be informed of the decision for an MSc student to re-enter the Department as a PhD candidate. The Graduate Coordinator or Learning Strategist will generally meet with such students to counsel them on the appropriate path and procedures for their successful defence and re-entry to the Department.

Note that the MSc Examining Committee does not make admission decisions. The Committee can only recommend, via the ballots and Chair's summary, whether the requirement of the qualification exam should be waived if the student joins the PhD program. In cases where the student has completed an MSc and applied to our PhD program, but has not distinguished themselves over the course of their MSc, the Admissions Committee will consult with the Chair of the Exam Committee to determine whether their performance during the defence should have an impact on the Admissions Committee's decision.

It is important to note that students who rejoin the Department to complete a PhD are held to the same standards as other PhD students. All PhD students are expected to have one to three complete and original data chapters in their PhD thesis. Results reported in the MSc thesis cannot be re-published as part of the results section of a data chapter within a PhD thesis. They may, instead, be referred to in the introduction or discussion sections of any chapter along with proper citations.

Students who wish to defend their MSc with the intent of applying to our PhD Program must:

1. Discuss with the Graduate Coordinator and/or Learning Strategist their plan to re-enter the Department.
2. Inform the Examining Committee Members **at least three weeks** before the date of the MSc Oral Exam that they wish to be considered for admission to the PhD program.
3. Upon fulfilling all requirements for a MSc, the student must submit an online SGS application for the PhD program in our Department. This may be outside of the regular admissions cycle, and so the student must coordinate with the Admissions & Student Services Officer to proceed with the application. The Graduate Coordinator, in consultation with the Chair of the Admissions Committee, and one or more Admissions Committee members, will promptly review the student's application (as these situations often occur outside of normal application cycles). MSc students are held to a higher standard than BSc students, and it is often the case that we will not admit students with an MSc into our PhD program. However, if the application is approved, under certain circumstances, the student can be enrolled into the PhD program at the beginning of the following term, allowing the student to remain an officially enrolled student throughout the transition. However, this possibility must be discussed with the Learning Strategist and Graduate Coordinator, and it is important to consider timing of defence/re-entry to make the transition as seamless as possible.

Note: The caliber of performance required for acceptance into the PhD program is significantly higher than for a terminal MSc degree. Students may successfully pass the MSc Oral Exam but not be admitted to the PhD program.

Students who intend to continue in the same laboratory on the same (or similar) project may also request a waiver of the qualification exam, if readmitted, via the following process:

1. Follow all required steps above, notifying both the department and Exam Committee members of the additional intention to request a qualification waiver.
2. Include a “Future Directions” section at the end of the MSc thesis that describes the proposed PhD project. This section should be a maximum of 6 double-spaced (23 lines/page, 12 point font, 2 cm margins) pages and may include additional figures and/or tables. This section should be similar to parts 3 and 4 of the reclassification proposal as follows:
 - **Rationale** - 1 page: What key question(s) is/are going to be addressed? Why address this question using this particular experimental system? What hypothesis or hypotheses will be tested?
 - **Specific aims** - 4-5 pages: Describe the specific experiments that will be carried out during the PhD studies. The purpose of the experiments with respect to the general rationale should be made clear. The student should point out possible pitfalls in experiments and suggest alternative approaches. Generally, the student should describe two to three distinct aims. The student should discuss potential outcomes of the experiments and how they will proceed given these outcomes, should be discussed. The student should convince the Committee that experiments are feasible and will produce relevant and significant data.

Students are expected to answer the same types of questions that would be asked at a reclassification exam, whether they are planning to continue the same project or not.

Students who intend to undertake their PhD in a different laboratory, or to work on a substantially different project in the same laboratory, are not eligible to request a waiver of their qualification exam. These students, and those who request but do not successfully obtain a waiver, will be expected to undertake a qualification exam in the second year of their PhD.

Students who rejoin our Department and stay in the same lab should not do rotations. Students who plan to join a different lab can rotate in up to three labs upon joining the PhD program, assuming re-entry in September, though at the discretion of the Graduate Coordinator, these students may have the option of forgoing rotations.

It is important to note that in general, work done in partial fulfillment of an MSc degree cannot be used in partial fulfillment of a PhD degree. However, students who complete an MSc degree in our Department and subsequently begin a PhD here will not need to repeat courses completed during the MSc. Only additional [PhD curriculum requirements](#) will apply.

PhD Oral Exam (Defence)

When all course requirements have been met, the student has held a [Terminal meeting](#) and written a thesis, and the Supervisor has read and approved the thesis, students may proceed to the PhD Oral Exam. The Department expects that the typical PhD student will take about 5-7 years after first registration to complete the PhD-related research, course work and thesis writing (see

“[Time Limits for Writing the PhD Thesis](#)” below). It is the Department’s expectation that a PhD thesis will contain one to three complete data chapters. The PhD thesis exam is a formal defence of a thesis based on original scientific research as well as a test of the student's general scientific knowledge and abilities.

Requesting Permission to Write the PhD Thesis

Permission to write a PhD thesis is given at a [Terminal Committee Meeting](#). A detailed outline of the proposed thesis (generally in bullet point form and typically longer than a page) is presented at this meeting. The detailed outline should be included in the student’s Committee Meeting progress report that is distributed to Supervisory Committee members at least seven days before the Terminal Committee Meeting via the regular meeting form. Note that Committee members can also post-date this form up to six weeks after the date of the Terminal Committee meeting should experiments be completed within that timeframe. If experiments take longer than six weeks, another Terminal Committee Meeting must be scheduled by the student upon completion of all experiments.

Students may begin writing parts of their thesis **at any time**, but after formal ‘permission to write’ is given, the student should be devoted full-time to thesis writing and should not conduct additional experiments until the "PhD Oral Exam Request" form has been submitted online. Exceptions to this guideline can arise over the course of the writing period. For example, reviews from a submitted manuscript might compel the student to perform additional experiments, or holes in the thesis may become apparent during the writing process that necessitates additional experimentation. The student’s discretion should be applied here. Under no circumstances, however, should new experimental avenues be explored at this point in the program. If supervisors expect additional experimental work during the writing period, the student should be entitled to a corresponding extension of the period of stipend coverage.

Time Limits for Writing the PhD Thesis

Students must defend within **six months** of receiving permission to write.

- Students have **3 - 3.5 months** to write the full initial draft (with a range based on how much time students set aside to make edits after Supervisor and Supervisory Committee review). Supervisors may differ as to whether they want to review the full draft all at once or to see different chapters as completed, so a discussion is recommended.
- After the full draft has been submitted to the Supervisor, they have up to three weeks to read and critique the thesis. The student then makes edits based on supervisory feedback.
- The edited draft is then submitted to the Supervisory Committee, who has three weeks to read and critique the thesis. The student then makes edits based on committee feedback.
- The [PhD Oral Exam Request](#) form must be submitted at least **eight weeks** prior to the agreed-upon date of the examination. Failure to meet this deadline will likely result in the exam request being denied, as it impacts subsequent hard deadlines imposed by SGS. Note that final copies of the thesis are no longer required for this form, so the form can be submitted at any point after the Supervisor has approved the full thesis draft.
- The final version of the thesis must be sent to the External Examiner at least **six weeks** prior to the examination **by the Supervisor**. Students must not contact the External Examiner themselves. The student should receive an appraisal from the External Examiner by two weeks before the examination.

- The final version of the thesis must also be sent to the full Examination Committee at least **four weeks** prior to the examination.

Supervisors are required to pay students during the thesis writing and defense period for up to six months, provided the student has not taken another job. If a student has set up the exam within the required time frame, the stipend must be paid until both the Oral Exam and thesis revisions recommended by the Exam Committee have been completed.

If a full thesis draft hasn't been sent to the supervisor by **six months** after permission to write, then a [Thesis Writing committee meeting](#) should be held. If thesis writing is delayed such that the submission of the thesis and defense take longer than six months, continuation of the stipend is at the discretion of the Supervisor.

Organization and Content of the PhD Thesis

The Department strongly encourages students to obtain examples of theses from previous members of their lab. In addition, theses from previous students in the program can be found through the [How Can I Find a U of T Thesis](#) guide.

The fundamental requirement of the PhD is to make a contribution to knowledge. First-author research publications are the standard evidence that this requirement has been met. Papers also illustrate that the students can finish projects, and can document and interpret their work. It is thus a standard expectation that PhD projects would lead to such publications, and that graduates would strive to obtain first-author publications during their thesis studies.

However, obtaining a PhD in the Department is not dependent on the work being published at the time of graduation, and though it is preferred that the student has participated in at least one manuscript submission, completion of the degree should not be delayed by publication strategies or lengthy review processes that are beyond the control of the student. The Committee must nonetheless agree that the work meets the same standards as a journal publication and constitutes a substantive body of work that is appropriate for the PhD.

A typical PhD thesis includes between one and three data chapters, with one being the minimum requirement.

The thesis should be written in the first person (use of the pronoun "I"), as it describes the student's individual work: experiments, rationale, hypotheses, and conclusions.

- **Introduction:**
 - Should provide the relevant background to the thesis work.
 - Should not be a general survey of every topic touched upon by the work.
 - Should clearly outline the state of knowledge in the field of research and emphasize the outstanding questions in the field, especially those that are specifically addressed by the thesis research.
 - An excellent Introduction will be interesting to read and will propose hypotheses (possibly novel) to explain data in the literature. This is the student's chance to demonstrate mastery of the subject matter of the thesis studies. Students should not be afraid to express their opinions. This is the student's thesis, and their

opportunity to write their own story. The Introduction should end with a brief outline and rationale for the thesis research. The Introduction should not generally exceed 25-30 pages.

- Frequently, excellent Introduction sections may be published as Review articles in the field of the student. The student and Supervisor may wish to coordinate these efforts to obtain such a publication.

- **Data Chapters:**

- Students should aspire to have one to three data chapters in their thesis. Note that the data chapters are not required to be published papers. A data chapter should contain enough data to reach a significant conclusion that could be published in a high-quality journal for the field in question.
- The data chapter(s) should describe the experiments performed by the student.
- Work of collaborators may be included when this work is crucial for the understanding of the student's own data. When work by collaborators is included, those experiments done by collaborators should be clearly indicated. There must be a general explanation on the cover page of each data chapter outlining the contributions from each person.
- In the body of the chapter, use "I" to describe the student's experiments, and the name of the collaborator(s) (or "we", if appropriate) to describe others' experiments/data. The chapter must be written to emphasize the student's own work.
- The introduction to a data chapter should not be a direct copy of material already presented in the general introduction, but rather a summary of key points needed to provide the context for that data chapter.
- **Figures and tables** not exceeding three pages in length (see the [note above](#) for instructions on how to present very large datasets) should be placed in the body of the chapter, on the page following their first introduction, and not in a separate section at the end of the chapter. Where possible, the legend should be on the same page as the display item.
- Aside from very large datasets or movies (see above), there should be no reference to supplemental materials/figures/tables; all relevant data should be presented in the results section of the data chapter.
- Sometimes, figures that have been copied into a thesis are of inadequate resolution. Students must ensure that all figures within a thesis are at least 300 dpi.
- It is never permissible for a published or unpublished manuscript to be used as a data chapter without some alteration. Even in the case of a single author paper by the student, the introduction must be modified to avoid repetition with the thesis introductory chapter, and all supplementary materials will be incorporated into the results section of the chapter as described above.
- If a study involves **Human Subjects**, a section in the materials section should be included that indicates that the study was approved by an Institutional Review Board (specify which), and that informed consent was obtained from all human subjects. If a study involves **vertebrate subjects**, a section in the materials section should be included that indicates that all related protocols that were used were reviewed by the appropriate animal care board (specify which).

- Finally, the term ‘data not shown’ does not belong in a thesis. Arguments that rely on casual observation because no data was collected should not be present in a data chapter because this provides evidence of poor scientific method. Speculation based on casual observation is permissible within a concluding chapter, so long as it is clearly stated that the argument relies on casual observation and not on real data.
- **Concluding Chapter:**
 - Should begin with an overall summary of the work that explains how it has advanced the field. Students should refer to questions and hypotheses raised in the Introduction and explain how the research has solved (or maybe not solved) these problems. This chapter can propose hypotheses and models, and should emphasize the student’s own view of the field. The thesis should finish by suggesting several future investigations that would further address the key issues in the field.

Thesis Formatting

See the [corresponding section](#) above.

A Note on the Inclusion of Very Large Datasets, Movies, and References to Published Supplemental Materials within the Thesis

See the [corresponding section](#) above.

Scheduling the PhD Oral Exam

The Supervisor must approve the student’s thesis prior to the online submission of the “PhD Oral Exam Request” form (available on the Departmental [Forms and Links](#) page).

Students will submit the form online once they have confirmed a date and time for the exam with all members of the Exam Committee. This request may be submitted at any point after the Supervisor has approved the draft of the student’s thesis and no less than **eight weeks** prior to the exam. This allows the Graduate Program Coordinator sufficient time to have the Exam Committee approved by the School of Graduate Studies and to find rooms for the public seminar and subsequent Oral Examination, if necessary. Failure to meet this deadline will likely result in the exam request being denied.

To complete the form, students will need the date, time, and location of the seminar and exam, committee composition, and a 1-page double-spaced abstract. Note that final copies of the thesis are no longer required for this form. A curriculum vitae for the proposed External Examiner/Appraiser must also be provided, along with other details about them. If a student cannot find a current CV online for the prospective External Examiner/Appraiser, the Supervisor must obtain one on the student’s behalf. It is important to note that the student must not have any contact with the External Examiner prior to the PhD thesis defence, including the distribution of the thesis. This communication should be carried out by the Supervisor.

In general, defences are expected to take place in person (though the External Examiner and SGS-assigned Chair may join virtually). However, the department will approve a remote/virtual

defence under some circumstances; the student must discuss this request with a Graduate Coordinator before submitting the Exam Request.

The student's Supervisor will send the External Examiner/Appraiser the edited PhD thesis at least **six weeks** prior to the exam date. The student and supervisor must also ensure that the thesis is distributed date to all other Exam Committee members at the same time, or at least **four weeks** prior to the exam.

The External Examiner/Appraiser must submit a written appraisal of the thesis to the Graduate Program Coordinator at least two weeks prior to the exam. If the report is not received by that date, the student should notify the Graduate Program Coordinator and will be asked to sign a waiver; otherwise the School of Graduate Studies may cancel the examination and request another six weeks' notice for rescheduling.

Choosing the PhD Oral Exam Committee

The "Request to set up a PhD Oral Examination" form includes a list of proposed Exam Committee members. The Graduate Program Coordinator will ensure that all the Exam Committee members are willing to serve and will be available for the exam. Final composition of the Committee is subject to the Graduate Coordinator and SGS approval.

The Exam Committee is composed of:

1. The student's **Supervisor**.
2. **Supervisory Committee members** (usually 1 or 2)
3. **An Arm's-Length Molecular Genetics Department member** within the student's primary research field, chosen and invited by the student and Supervisor. This person must not have been involved with the student's research project.
4. An **Academic Faculty Member** from another University of Toronto department. This examiner cannot have been closely involved in the supervision of the thesis. This member is selected by the student and Supervisor. Faculty members from other departments cross-appointed to Molecular Genetics are not eligible to fill this role.
5. An **External Examiner/Appraiser** (a faculty member from another university, who must be at least an Associate or Full Professor or equivalent). The External Examiner must have an arm's-length relationship to both the candidate and the Supervisor. The student is not permitted to have any contact with the examiner prior to the exam. An External Examiner cannot be used more frequently than once every two years for Committees with substantive overlap of members with whom the external has served within the past two years (i.e. more than three voting members.). The External Examiner is selected by the student and Supervisor.
6. A **Chair for the Exam Committee** - a non-voting faculty member from another department, appointed by the School of Graduate Studies. This member is *not* selected by the student or Supervisor.

Thesis Defence Exam Committee members from the University of Toronto must be Full Members of the Graduate School.

Both the student and Supervisor should bear in mind that the Department has very limited funds to pay the expenses of the External Examiner. The Department will provide an honorarium for

the External Examiner, limited travel funding, and standard 1-2 night accommodations. Additional travel funding and funding for a group lunch/dinner are provided if and only if the External Examiner presents a Departmental Seminar on campus. All additional expenses are the responsibility of the Supervisor. The Supervisor should contact the Graduate Program Coordinator to verify current amounts, and to schedule the Departmental Seminar as needed.

Delays in Holding the PhD Oral Exam

The Oral Exam itself should take place **within six months** of the date permission was given to write a thesis. If the writing timeline is delayed to the extent that a complete first draft has not been submitted to the supervisor by the six-month deadline, a [Thesis Writing Committee Meeting](#) should be held to discuss progress and establish a new timeline. (If the draft has been submitted on time, but the defence is delayed for other reasons such as scheduling logistics, no meeting is required.) The Graduate Coordinator may be involved as necessary.

At this meeting, continued provision of stipend support beyond the required six-month period should also be discussed. After the six-month period, continuation of the stipend is at the discretion of the Supervisor; **however**, a Supervisor may not withdraw a student's stipend without prior consultation with the Graduate Coordinator.

The former "Thesis Extension" form has been deprecated.

Delays in Feedback and Approval of PhD Thesis

Since thesis writing and Committee approval must be completed within a tight timeframe, Supervisors and Supervisory Committee members are obliged to promptly read and approve a draft thesis. Supervisors are expected to read and return theses to their students in three weeks or less. Committee members are expected to read and return theses with comments in three weeks or less. If a student does not receive the corrected thesis within these time frames, they should contact the Supervisor or Committee member by email and obtain a revised deadline for finishing the corrections. If this subsequent deadline is unreasonable or if this deadline is not met, the student should report the situation to the Graduate Coordinator along with appropriate documentation. The Graduate Coordinator will take immediate measures to resolve the situation. Students should keep in mind that the Graduate Coordinators are allies in this situation.

Students are expected to incorporate recommended changes from the Supervisor and Committee Members before distributing the thesis to the External Examiner (via the Supervisor) and other Exam Committee members. If there are disagreements between a Committee member and the student and/or Supervisor about the nature and/or extent of the changes to be made to the thesis, the Graduate Coordinator should be consulted. The Graduate Coordinator will decide on how to proceed. Note that this resolution process will not be influenced by prior unofficial arrangements of PhD Oral Exam dates (e.g. having agreed on a date with an External Examiner).

The Department will not tolerate excessive delays by faculty members in reading and approving theses. Offenders will be sanctioned and may lose their graduate appointments.

PhD Examination Process **Public Seminar**

- 40-45 minutes in length
- Given prior to the PhD Oral Examination.
- Exam Committee members may not ask questions.

Oral Examination

- Follows immediately after the public seminar.
- Up to 120 minutes in length, varies depending on Committee size (~10-15min per examiner).
- The Exam Committee questions the student on their knowledge of technical and theoretical matters related to thesis, and on general knowledge of the research area.

Discussion

- The student leaves the room, and the Exam Committee has a closed-door discussion of the thesis and its defence and deliberates the outcome. Approximately 15 minutes.

Possible Outcomes of the PhD Oral Exam (taken from the [SGS website](#))

PhD Oral Exam Voting Procedure

At the conclusion of the PhD thesis defence, the Exam Committee decides whether or not the written thesis and oral defence are acceptable. If the thesis defence is deemed unacceptable, then the examination is adjourned. The PhD candidate will fail and be ineligible to receive the PhD degree if the thesis remains unacceptable at a reconvened examination.

If the thesis defence is deemed acceptable, the Committee decides whether:

1. The thesis is acceptable 'as-is', in its present form
2. The thesis requires 'editorial corrections'. Editorial corrections involve typographical errors, errors in punctuation or problems in style; they must be correctable within one month. The Supervisor will inform the Candidate of the necessary corrections and must certify in writing to the SGS PhD Examinations Office (via our Graduate Program Coordinator) that the corrections have been made. Or
3. The thesis requires 'minor revisions'. Minor revisions are more than changes in style and less than major changes in the thesis. A typical example of a minor modification is clarification of textual material or the qualification of research findings or conclusions. Minor modifications must be feasibly completed within three months. The Chair of the Examination Committee must appoint a supervising Subcommittee to be approved by the Examination Committee and a Convener is thus designated. The Convener of the Subcommittee shall report with a brief written statement the necessary minor modifications preferably before the Examination Committee disperses, but as soon after the examination as possible and ensure that the Candidate, Supervisor, and the SGS PhD Examinations Office receives a copy of the statement (via our Graduate Program Coordinator). The Convener of the Subcommittee shall also within three months of the date of the examination report in writing to the SGS PhD Examinations Office and the Examination Chair the state of completion of the required minor modifications (via our Graduate Program Coordinator).

The Chair of the PhD Oral Exam must submit a completed copy of the examination paperwork to SGS and the Graduate Program Coordinator immediately after the conclusion of the exam, and the student will receive instructions from SGS. After a successful defence and completing

revisions, the Supervisor must notify the Graduate Program Coordinator in writing (by email) that the student has made all the recommended corrections to their thesis. Upon receipt of a report from the chair of the Exam Committee and the confirmation from the Supervisor, the student can upload their thesis as instructed.

Post-Exam Thesis Preparation

See the [corresponding section](#) above.

The degree is considered complete when the final thesis is uploaded to ProQuest.

Commitments that Conflict with the Completion of a Student's Degree

Students often pursue other academic endeavors after completing a MSc or PhD. Arrangements for the commencement of these endeavors are sometimes made by students prior to the scheduling of the thesis defence date, or even before formal permission is given by the Supervisory Committee to write the thesis. This may result in a desire to complete the degree in what may be an unrealistic timeframe. The Supervisor and Supervisory Committee members are sometimes put in a position of choosing between upholding the academic standards of the Department or being sympathetic to the student's career plans. In these situations, it is important that all concerned consider the following:

- It is the Supervisory Committee's primary role to assist in educating the student in the art of doing science and all that this entails, including upholding the standards that have given our Department its excellent reputation.
- It is the **student's** responsibility to ensure that any external deadline is met. If completion of the MSc/PhD degree is not possible within the proposed timeline, the student must defer entrance to the post-graduate program or other opportunity.
- The student should consult the Supervisor and Supervisory Committee regarding planned time to completion of a degree before making commitments with a fixed deadline to other academic programs or employment options.
- The student should be aware of the time allowed for a Supervisory Committee member to critique their thesis (See "[Scheduling the MSc Oral Exam](#)", and "[Scheduling the PhD Oral Exam](#)"). These timelines do not include any vacation time that a Committee member might take. Professors cannot be expected to read theses while on vacation.
- The student should be aware that many faculty members submit grant applications to CIHR or other agencies at various times throughout the year. These faculty members typically focus exclusively on grant writing for a month or more ahead of each deadline. Hence, finding non-Supervisory members willing to sit on the student's Examining Committee can be a challenge during these periods.

The minimum time required by our Department to approve and finalize an Oral Exam after the Graduate Program Coordinator receives the appropriate form is **three weeks for a MSc** and **eight weeks for a PhD**. This timeline is not negotiable. It is set by SGS to enable the External Examiner and Examining Committee to properly review the thesis and for the External Examiner to submit a critique of the thesis.

Note: Simultaneous registration in two full-time academic programs is a violation of the School of Graduate Studies rules.

STUDENT FUNDING

ESSENTIALS

- Students are responsible for [paying tuition by deadlines](#)
- After rotations, [stipends are administered at nodes](#), and students are responsible for completing GEMS agreements and notifying node business officers of awards, leaves of absence, program completion, and other changes that impact stipend
- For cohorts starting September 2024 and later, [PhD students are guaranteed five years of funding](#), and will be automatically granted two additional one-year funding extensions as long as they have maintained good academic standing and met program requirements in the previous academic year.
- For cohorts starting September 2024 and later, [MSc students are guaranteed three years of funding](#), with one automatic one-year extension under the same conditions.
- If they obtain ‘permission to write’ within a funded period, [students will also be funded](#) through the defence and submission of Supervisor-approved corrections to their thesis to SGS, as long as the defence occurs within the standard timeline after permission to write (6 months for PhD and 4 months for MSc).
- Students who began their program before September 2024 receive stipend coverage for the full duration of their program, up through the standard writing period, as long as they maintain good academic standing.
- [PhD requirements](#) are clarified under the funding policy.

Funding will come from various [scholarships/fellowships](#) that the student has applied for and been awarded, and in the absence of that, from the Supervisor’s grant. The [Temerty Faculty of Medicine’s Harmonized Base Funding Agreement](#) currently governs the stipend amount and top-up policies for students in all eight Basic Science departments (see the RHSE [Financial Support page](#) for details). They calculate yearly stipend amounts based on an estimate of living expenses (living allowance) and the current year’s tuition fees. For those students who extend their PhD program beyond six years (direct entry PhD students) or beyond seven years (students who reclassified into the PhD program), SGS reduces the student's program fees by ~50% (incidental fees remain the same), and the tuition portion of their stipend is decreased accordingly.

Submission of the corrected thesis represents program completion, and stipend coverage must then stop.

See the [Funding page](#) for more information.

Tuition Fees

All students are responsible for paying their own tuition fees by the deadlines set by the University of Toronto. Many students choose to defer tuition fees until April of the academic year. This must be done in August/September before the academic year begins. The Department is unable to pay the fees on any student's behalf because this will disqualify them from receiving a tax credit. Students who are in arrears are not eligible to register with the School of Graduate Studies. Current tuition fee schedules are posted on the [Student Accounts website](#). Please note that tuition is reduced in extension years and program fees are prorated by month for final-year PhD students.

Administration of Student Funding

During a student's rotation period, the stipend is paid through the Department. Once a student has settled into a permanent lab, payment of the stipend is administered through the node at which the student is located. General enquiries, including about taxes and similar issues, should be directed to the Business Officer in the student's node. The final thesis lab for each student will be invoiced by the Department for the entire stipend paid to the student during the rotation period.

Students and Supervisors are required to fill out Graduate Education Management System (GEMS) agreements online, detailing all funding sources for a student by October 1 each year. Students and Supervisors will be notified each year when the GEMS system is operational. GEMS agreements are important and enable the Department to maintain quotas for fellowships and funding, thus it is critical for the Department to achieve 100% compliance. For more information see the [RIHSE's page on GEMS](#).

Students must ensure that any changes or problems with stipend payments are brought to the attention of their Business Officer as soon as possible. It is particularly worth noting that in cases where awards are concerned, it is the student's decision whether to accept or decline an award as well as the duration for which they may accept the award. The onus is thus on the student to inform their Business Officer as to which award they are accepting, when and for how long. Students must also notify the Graduate Program Coordinator of all awards and funding changes. On the other hand, it is in effect the Supervisor and Supervisory Committee's decision to terminate a student's stipend if they fail to fulfill the requirements of this handbook, in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator.

Up to one month's notice may be required to make payroll changes. Students must inform the Graduate Administrator and relevant Business Officer personally of the following changes:

- Selection of a permanent lab
- Change of Supervisor
- Receipt or cancellation of an award
- Long-term leave of absence
- Withdrawal from the program
- Completion of the degree (if it coincides with the Supervisor's decision to terminate stipend payments)

Any attempt to retain an award while registered as a full-time student in another program is in clear violation of the rules of the awarding body and the School of Graduate Studies. The student must familiarize themselves with the rules of the award they have accepted and abide by those rules.

Awards & Scholarships

Students are encouraged to apply for external scholarships from such agencies as:

- [Natural Science and Engineering Research Council \(NSERC\)](#)
- [Canadian Cancer Society Research Institute](#)
- [Canadian Institutes of Health Research \(CIHR\)](#)
- [Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships](#)
- [Ontario Graduate Scholarships \(OGS\)](#)

Applications and eligibility requirements are available on the respective websites.

Apart from these major awards/scholarships, the School of Graduate Studies ([Awards & Funding page](#)) and the Temerty Faculty of Medicine's Research, Innovation & Health Science Education Office ([Graduate Student Financial Support page](#)) maintain full lists of available awards and scholarships to which graduate students can apply.

Other Earnings

Graduate students in the Department are strongly encouraged to focus first and foremost on their thesis work. To ensure students in their first term of our program focus on their rotations and course work, we do not recommend that students take on TA positions during this time. Academic studies and research should remain as the first priority.

Students may earn from additional sources but are expected to work as full-time students even if they take on other work, i.e., degree productivity and coursework must not be affected.

Policy on Funding & Program Length

Policy for PhD students

- (1) PhD students are guaranteed five years of funding, so long as they maintain good academic standing. This includes 'regular' PhD students, direct-entry PhD students, and those who start as MSc students and transfer to the PhD, with the five years counted from the start of their MSc registration.
 - a. Students who began their program before September 2024 should, in alignment with their funding confirmation letters, continue to be funded beyond the five-year guarantee, so long as they maintain good academic standing.
- (2) To remain in good standing, all students must hold committee meetings at least once per year, with meetings every six months required before the qualification exam.
 - a. Students post-qualification/reclassification should hold their annual committee meeting by the end of June (September for January entry). This maintains a yearly timeline following the second-year exam, and ensures that students have adequate time to repeat committee meetings within the academic year if necessary.
 - b. Starting in fourth year, meetings must feature a time-to-completion (TTC) discussion. Students must prepare a thesis outline and timeline of tasks remaining for completion of the degree, to be included in their report and discussed at the meeting. The supervisor and committee must record whether they agree that the student's timeline and thesis outline are feasible.
 - c. The department recognizes that students often encounter challenges scheduling committee meetings. Per SGS, "A student who encounters difficulties arranging a meeting of [their] committee should consult the chair, director, or graduate coordinator of the graduate unit in advance of the relevant deadline for doing so."² Molecular Genetics students should contact the Graduate Coordinators or Learning Strategist if they are experiencing challenges arranging meetings.
 - d. Per SGS regulations, if a student does not hold a meeting by the required deadline "through their own neglect" (i.e., without seeking departmental support), they "will be considered to have received an unsatisfactory progress report from the committee"², i.e., a failing grade for that meeting, and will be considered "not in

good standing”. They will be reminded to hold another meeting before the end of the current academic year and warned that not restoring good standing risks termination of funding or registration.

- e. If students subsequently have not held the meeting by the academic year deadline (for post-qualification/reclassification students, this would be August, or December for January entrants) and remain not in good standing, their case will be reviewed by the Graduate Coordinators, who may terminate funding or “recommend to the School of Graduate Studies the termination of registration and eligibility of that student.”²
- (3) To maintain good academic standing, students must also “make satisfactory progress towards the completion of the degree”², and demonstrating satisfactory progress requires regular communication with supervisors.
- a. Students who have been absent from the lab and unresponsive to communications from their supervisor for more than a month without an approved Leave of Absence or other documented agreement with their supervisor will be considered "not in good standing" and funding may be stopped. Students are encouraged, wherever possible, to discuss anticipated absences with their supervisor and to apply for a Leave of Absence when necessary.
 - i. Supervisors will email the student and department about the student’s absence.
 - ii. The department will take additional steps to attempt to contact the student and inform them that funding will be cut off a month after this communication.
 - iii. At the point of funding cutoff, the student’s case will be reviewed by the Graduate Coordinators, who may additionally “recommend to the School of Graduate Studies the termination of registration and eligibility of that student.”²
 - iv. Should students re-establish contact with their supervisor and the department while still registered, the Graduate Coordinators will consider the resumption of funding, pending determination that the student has restored good academic standing.
- (4) Students and supervisors should make all efforts to have students complete degree requirements within the time limit for the PhD.
- a. Program extensions are available beyond this limit, but intended to be used in “exceptional circumstances”.
 - b. Students are encouraged to meet with the Learning Strategist for a Program Mapping Meeting by the end of the 5th year, to plan out timelines, discuss barriers, and discuss strategies for on-time completion. Students are encouraged to continue these meetings at least yearly.
 - c. Students who will not have held a terminal meeting by the end of the 7th year must meet with the Graduate Coordinator or Learning Strategist to discuss the need for a Program Extension. At these meetings, students are encouraged to identify barriers to on-time completion and potential sources of support.
 - d. Particularly in sixth year and above, students may request that the department assign another departmental faculty member to join their next committee meeting, to provide an arm’s-length perspective on the student’s progress and timeline for

program completion. This request should be made to the Learning Strategist or Graduate Coordinators, ideally more than one month before the committee meeting in question.

- (5) The following modifications will be made to the process above for students who began September 2024 or later:
 - a. Students who do not hold a TTC meeting by the end of years 5 or 6 will automatically be ineligible for continued funding in the following year; by default, funding will end at the end of August.
 - b. Students **must** meet with the Learning Strategist for a Program Mapping Meeting at the end of the 6th year in order to be granted an extension into the 7th year.
 - c. Students will not be eligible for funding beyond seven years, and supervisors may not pay students for more than seven years. Students **may** register by requesting a Program Extension, but they will need to pay their own tuition and fees.
- (6) Students who hold a successful terminal meeting during a funded period are granted six months of stipend and tuition support from the date of receiving 'permission to write'.
- (7) Leave of Absence (LOA) time is not counted and therefore students who have taken an LOA will be offset in the schedule above. It is up to the students to orchestrate this offset with the Graduate administrative team. Students who started in January will also have their dates offset accordingly.

Policy for MSc students

- (1) MSc students are guaranteed three years of funding, so long as they maintain good academic standing.
 - a. Students who began their program before September 2024 should, in alignment with their funding confirmation letters, continue to be funded beyond the three-year guarantee, so long as they maintain good academic standing.
- (2) To remain in good standing, all students must hold committee meetings at least every six months.
 - a. Students should hold their committee meetings by the end of March and September (July and January for January entry).
 - b. Starting at the third meeting, meetings must feature a time-to-completion (TTC) discussion. Students must prepare a thesis outline and timeline of tasks remaining for completion of the degree, to be included in their report and discussed at the meeting. The supervisor and committee must record whether they agree that the student's timeline and thesis outline are feasible.
 - c. The department recognizes that students often encounter challenges scheduling committee meetings. Per SGS, "A student who encounters difficulties arranging a meeting of [their] committee should consult the chair, director, or graduate coordinator of the graduate unit in advance of the relevant deadline for doing so."² Molecular Genetics students should contact the Graduate Coordinators or Learning Strategist if they are experiencing challenges arranging meetings.
 - d. Per SGS regulations, if a student does not hold a meeting by the required deadline "through their own neglect" (i.e., without seeking departmental support), they "will be considered to have received an unsatisfactory progress report from the committee"², i.e., a failing grade for that meeting, and will be considered "not in

good standing”. They will be reminded to hold another meeting within the next three months and warned that not restoring good standing risks termination of funding or registration.

- e. If students subsequently have not held the meeting by the three-month deadline and remain not in good standing, their case will be reviewed by the Graduate Coordinators, who may terminate funding or “recommend to the School of Graduate Studies the termination of registration and eligibility of that student.”²
- (3) To maintain good academic standing, students must also “make satisfactory progress towards the completion of the degree,”² and demonstrating satisfactory progress requires regular communication with supervisors.
- a. Students who have been absent from the lab and unresponsive to communications from their supervisor for more than a month without an approved Leave of Absence or other documented agreement with their supervisor will be considered "not in good standing" and funding may be stopped. Students are encouraged, wherever possible, to discuss anticipated absences with their supervisor and to apply for a Leave of Absence when necessary.
 - i. Supervisors will email the student and department about the student’s absence.
 - ii. The department will take additional steps to attempt to contact the student and inform them that funding will be cut off a month after this communication.
 - iii. At the point of funding cutoff, the student’s case will be reviewed by the Graduate Coordinators, who may additionally “recommend to the School of Graduate Studies the termination of registration and eligibility of that student.”²
 - iv. Should students re-establish contact with their supervisor and the department while still registered, the Graduate Coordinators will consider the resumption of funding, pending determination that the student has restored good academic standing.
- (4) Students and supervisors should make all efforts to have students complete degree requirements within the time limit for the MSc.
- a. Program extensions are available beyond this limit, but intended to be used in “exceptional circumstances”.
 - b. Students are encouraged to meet with the Learning Strategist for a Program Mapping Meeting by the end of the 2nd year, to plan out timelines, discuss barriers, and discuss strategies for on-time completion. Students are encouraged to continue these meetings at least yearly.
 - c. Students who will not have held a terminal meeting by the end of the 3rd year must meet with the Graduate Coordinator or Learning Strategist to discuss the need for a Program Extension. At these meetings, students are encouraged to identify barriers to on-time completion and potential sources of support.
 - d. Particularly in third year and above, students may request that the department assign another departmental faculty member to join their next committee meeting, to provide an arm’s-length perspective on the student’s progress and timeline for program completion. This request should be made to the Learning Strategist or

Graduate Coordinators, ideally more than one month before the committee meeting in question.

- (5) The following modifications will be made to the process above for students who began September 2024 or later:
 - a. Students who have not held two committee meetings in their third year will automatically be ineligible for continued funding in the following year; by default, funding will end at the end of August.
 - b. Students **must** meet with the Learning Strategist for a Program Mapping Meeting at the end of the 3rd year in order to be granted an extension into the 4th year.
 - c. Students will not be eligible for funding beyond four years, and supervisors may not pay students for more than four years. Students **may** register by requesting a Program Extension, but they will need to pay their own tuition and fees.
- (6) Students who hold a successful terminal meeting during a funded period are granted four months of stipend and tuition support from the date of receiving ‘permission to write’.
- (7) Leave of Absence (LOA) time is not counted and therefore students who have taken an LOA will be offset in the schedule above. It is up to the students to orchestrate this offset with the Graduate administrative team. Students who started in January will also have their dates offset accordingly.

References

1. [SGS: Maintaining Good Standing](#)
2. [SGS General Regulations, Section 7](#). Good Academic Standing and Satisfactory Academic Progress, Time Limits, Supervision, and Candidacy

Appendix A: Clarification of PhD requirements

Standard minimal expectation for PhD. The main requirement for the PhD is a “contribution to knowledge”, which typically takes the form of a first- or co-first-author paper. The publication process is unpredictable; a submission (or a submission-ready manuscript) is often considered sufficient if the supervisor and committee agree. Equivalent contributions to e.g. larger studies may also be considered as a bona fide “contribution to knowledge” if the work done by the student is suitable for PhD thesis chapter(s) (e.g. collaborative work or consortium studies, in which key contributions are often recognized by middle-authorships). The supervisor and supervisory committee must decide what is suitable. In such cases, the traditional two-data-chapter standard may be useful, but it should not be enforced as a requirement.

It is common that students and supervisors disagree about whether a project is “done”. Submission of a manuscript is a clear standard, but students and their supervisors also often disagree on whether a manuscript is submission-quality. The supervisory committee has the responsibility of making this assessment. The department encourages committees to take a more liberal view for students who are beyond five years. Students have multiple resources within the Department to contact with concerns: their committee, the grad team, the Learning Strategist, the Graduate Coordinators (faculty and staff), and the Chair.

Going beyond the minimum should not be forced upon students or labs. Students often exceed the main requirement of the PhD (e.g., submit first- or co-first-author papers in their 3rd or 4th

year), choosing to stay longer than required in order to bolster their academic credentials. If this strategy is the student's choice, and the supervisor and committee support it, then the Department will also support it, up to the program Time Limit. Conversely, a PhD student with a first- or co-first-author paper at least submitted, who has completed all other program requirements, should not be prevented from graduating, provided there is enough material for a credible PhD thesis.

Many students do not intend to pursue an academic career, and will not benefit from the additional work. Supervisors and committees should not be forcibly upholding higher standards than what is required by the institution in which the student is registered.

Similarly, if a student has satisfied the basic requirement, but wants to stay longer, while the supervisor prefers graduation, the committee should encourage graduation, and should not agree to extensions beyond five years. Students should be aware that laboratories face funding, space, and time/attention constraints.

Students and faculty should consider that academic credentials can also be boosted by doing a short postdoc in the PhD lab, or another local lab, and that writing a PhD thesis can be an effective way to regroup on stalled or confusing projects.

Appendix B: Related matters

(A) Student financial support mechanisms (e.g. U of T Opens, Dean's stipend support) will only be available to MSc students in years 1-2 and PhD students in years 1-4 (MSc-holding, direct entry, and MSc transfer students are treated equally).

(B) The Department recognizes that students may need to hold secondary jobs and may have e.g. family obligations that can limit lab time and delay degree progress. We encourage students to discuss these issues with their supervisor, their committee, and the Learning Strategist or a Graduate Coordinator. Our graduate programs are full-time, and cannot function if the labs are not productive, because productivity is required to obtain funding for the research projects and the student stipends. Students who have stopped working, are working only part-time, or claim to be working offsite yet are accomplishing very little, are therefore creating financial and logistical problems for their supervisor and for the department. They are also not following the arrangement that was agreed upon by the department, the supervisor, and the student. These situations may compromise degree progress and standing, and should be discussed well in advance.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUPPORTS

ESSENTIALS

- The department has policies on [academic honesty](#), including on [authorship](#) and the [use of generative artificial intelligence](#).
- There are also [expectations and recommendations for professionalism](#).
- Graduate students are entitled to 15 working days per year of [personal time off](#), with certain considerations.
- [Leaves of absence](#) (LOA) are available for long-term illness, parental leave, or any other factors that present substantial challenges to progress in the program.
- Students may also request to use a one-term leave of absence to [undertake an internship](#), if guidelines are adhered to.
- The department will attempt to reach non-responsive students via [emergency contacts](#).
- Registration in the program may be [terminated](#) under certain circumstances.
- Students must register continuously from the start of the program through completion (final thesis upload), except for LOA terms.
- Students are encouraged to review and draw upon [mental health resources](#) as needed.

Relevant Policy

Students are responsible for being aware of relevant policies and procedures, including (but not limited to):

- The [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) and the [Code of Student Conduct](#)
- The Policies on [Workplace Violence](#) and [Workplace Harassment](#)
- The [Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment](#)
- Policies and guidelines on [Ethical Conduct in Research](#), [Human Research](#), and [Animal Research](#)

Academic Honesty

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

- *You are in a graduate program, and thus should take the university Honour Code (Resources: U of T's [Academic Code](#) and [Website](#)) very seriously.* Please familiarize yourself with the guidelines for policies including academic honesty, plagiarism, cheating. The work you do in this program must be your own. Do not falsify or misrepresent your data.
- Be sure to **cite your sources** to avoid issues of plagiarism and dishonesty.
- **Collaboration** is a key component of science and will play a prominent role in our curriculum and your training. When collaborating with other students, fairly attribute their contributions. Respect others' opinions, fairly divide work, and communicate regularly with your team.
- Talk to your instructors or Supervisor immediately if you have questions or doubts about what constitutes academic dishonesty. Plagiarism in courses will result in a failing grade, and the incident will be reported to SGS for disciplinary action.

Authorship

One of the strengths of our Department is the breadth and depth of collaboration that students have the opportunity to engage in. However, students and supervisors must ensure that all

collaborators explicitly discuss authorship and acknowledgment of work performed, and all decisions must be approved by the individuals involved before work is published or included in a thesis. Use of any materials from other sources, such as figures and datasets, must only occur with explicit, documented permission.

Students and supervisors will be required to attest that these steps have been taken upon submission of an oral exam request form, and so it is important to have these discussions as early as possible.

Guidelines on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

Note: These guidelines are under review and will be updated shortly.

In response to the rapid development of novel artificial intelligence tools, the Department has created a set of broad guidelines for the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) by our students. These guidelines take as a starting point the [Guidance on the Appropriate Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Graduate Theses](#) developed by SGS, but include academic activities beyond thesis writing, and have restrictions beyond those set out by the SGS Guidance. Our departmental guidelines will continue to evolve, but are based on the following core principles:

- Learning how to write and communicate your thoughts without assistance is a key element of a graduate education.
- You hold ultimate responsibility for what you write and produce as a scientist.
- Anything included in a scientific document that was not produced directly by you should be appropriately credited.

With these principles in mind, the Department has established the following guidelines, which all students are expected to adhere to, and all Supervisors and Supervisory Committees are expected to uphold:

1. All documents produced during students' degrees, including committee and examination reports and final theses, must ultimately be written by students themselves, based on ideas conceived of or formulated by them. Students may not copy and paste text drafted by generative AI tools.
2. Students should obtain and document general approval from their Supervisor and Supervisory Committee before using generative AI at any other stage of the writing process, including brainstorming or grammatical proofreading.
3. Any use of generative AI for other research activities—including literature search, code generation, analysis, or audio/image generation—must be undertaken cautiously, given the risk of spurious or biased data being generated. Such use must only happen with explicit, documented approval of the Supervisor and Supervisory Committee. Students are ultimately responsible for the accuracy of their work, and so they must understand the function, output, and limitation of the tools that they use; Supervisory Committees may assess this understanding.

4. If students receive approval to make use of generative AI, they must comprehensively document when and how they used these tools in all works whose content was in any way derived from the use of these tools.

Per SGS Guidance, “Unauthorized use of generative AI tools for scholarly work at the University of Toronto may be considered an offence under the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#), and research misconduct as defined in the [Policy on Ethical Conduct in Research](#) and the [Framework to Address Allegations of Research Misconduct](#).”

Within the scope allowed by the above guidelines, students are encouraged to bear in mind the following considerations and cautions:

- Engaging in challenging work is a key part of learning, and students should avoid any use of artificial intelligence that compromises opportunities to develop useful skills of their own.
- Students are responsible for accounting for and defending their work orally at committee meetings, qualification/reclassification examinations, and defenses. Therefore, it is in students’ best interests to ensure that they fully understand how all data are generated and interpreted.
- Many academic publishers have policies on generative artificial intelligence that are different from or more restrictive than the guidance here. Students must therefore be aware of and adhere to publishers’ requirements when submitting work.
- The use of generative artificial intelligence carries twofold intellectual property risks: First, generative AI may produce content derived substantially from others’ work, without attribution. Second, submitting content to generative AI tools risks inclusion of that content in training datasets and subsequent use by others.

The landscape of generative artificial intelligence tools will continue to evolve, and our Departmental guidelines will continue to evolve accordingly. Students are responsible for staying informed of current guidelines and maintaining an ongoing dialogue with their committees about any proposed uses.

Professionalism

Being a graduate student is an opportunity to learn and grow as a scientist. The following practices and tips will help you to succeed not only in MoGen, but in all professional settings going forward. Some points adapted from this [post](#).

Email and Communication

- **Check your university email regularly** for announcements related to class and professional opportunities, as well as for essential university communication.
- **Reply promptly** to any emails requiring response. Use proper email etiquette. (Resources: [Emailing your Professors](#) | [Emailing Professionally](#))
- **Proofread** emails, blogs, & other public materials online. These represent you and your brand.
- It’s okay to send a **follow up email** as a *polite nudge* if the person has not replied. The length of time varies based on circumstance, but two business days for faculty, longer for

professional contacts. Be patient: remember that your Supervisor and coworkers have multiple duties.

Technology Use

- You may **use technology in the classroom**, except when expressly prohibited, to take notes, refer to e-readings, look up references, and work on tasks as directed. You should, however, create a plan and be mindful to **limit distractions** (close tabs with social media, email, news sites, and off-task items, or install a Web Blocker (e.g. [Freedom](#)) if you struggle with self-control in this area).
- Be mindful of your use of **cell phones**, mobile devices, and other distractions when in lab or engaging with others in a professional context. Silence your phone when in meetings or seminars. Focusing your attention on the science and the moment you are in is both a good grad school and life strategy.

Respect

- **Please respect your peers and other professionals in person and online.** No bullying or disrespect will be tolerated. If you are experiencing any problems, please speak with your Supervisor or a member of the Grad Team immediately, so we can work together to resolve any issues.
- All students have a right to an **education free of harassment**. Each of us also carries the responsibility of ensuring our peers are experiencing a harassment-free education. (Resources: Office of the Vice Provost, Students [Website](#))
- Be an **active listener**. (Resource: [What Great Listeners Actually Do](#)). Be respectful of different points of views. Be calm and judicious in your responses. Think before you react.
- In this program, you will create a **professional presence online** (resumes, portfolios, LinkedIn, etc.). Remember, *nothing you post online is truly private*, and anything could be viewed by future employers. Consider the image you're cultivating before posting.
- On all **social media** accounts used in this program, including department accounts, as well as students' personal accounts used for assignments, etc., students are expected to uphold professional standards that meet university and professional codes of conduct.

Professional Conduct

- **Be humble.** Know what you know, but listen to learn more. We aspire that you'll leave this program with the understanding that there's lots more to learn, and that you can learn from people who aren't necessarily like you or who study different things.
- **Show up prepared:** read for class, prepare for presentations, meetings with your Supervisor, lab meetings, etc. You will get more out of and contribute more to meetings in which you enter prepared and thoughtful.
- **Networking** is a great way to develop contacts. It engages you in a professional community. Networking can happen digitally via Twitter, email, etc. Networking also gives you facetime with the people who are actually hiring.
 - Keep in touch with your professors, your peers, and other professional contacts from your time in graduate school. These people can bolster your professional success.

- Our yearly [Alumni Symposium](#) and regular career workshops provide additional opportunities for networking. The MoGen website has career advice [here](#).
- Have a **positive attitude**. People will respond to your attitude. Practice being interested in other people by asking them questions about their work. Always be **courteous**.
- **Follow through** if you say you'll do something. Don't promise more than you can deliver, but also don't sell yourself short. This is true in networking and in your scientific efforts. What you deliver helps to build your reputation.
- **Don't be late**. If it is impossible to be on time with something (e.g. a task or a meeting), communication is key. Let the person know as soon as possible and propose an alternative ("I could submit this on Thursday."). If it is a classroom assignment/project, communicate with your team members, if relevant, and talk with the professor before the due date to *ask* if an extension is possible.
 - Attend class. Don't be late to class, lab meetings, seminars, meetings with your Supervisor, etc. If you're going to be late, communicate with your Supervisor ASAP **before** you're due to arrive.
- **Own your mistakes**. Learn from them. Take criticism for your mistakes in stride and improve going forward.
- **Own your project**. Read the literature deeply. Talk with others in your lab about your science daily. Think about your science outside of the lab. When your experiments go awry, think about why this might be the case and go to your Supervisor with **solutions** instead of problems (X Problem + Y Solution. What do you think?). Scientists are creative problem solvers!

Tips for Getting the Most out of this Graduate Program

- Make a **calendar** with important tasks + deadlines. Set alerts for *approaching* deadlines. Plan ahead – don't procrastinate! And then, check your calendar regularly to see what is coming.
- Start building yourself a "**brand**" by wearing your passion on your sleeve. Standing out helps you get ahead in this field and helps you surround yourself with other passionate people.
- **Thank** those who support your research & professional development (librarians, archivists, Supervisors, reference writers, draft readers, etc.)
 - **Be kind and gracious** to the librarians, archivists, and others who support your research. Treat them as professionals. Express your gratitude to them, and remember that some may become potential bosses, colleagues, and mentors.
 - Similarly, be kind and gracious to community members and others you involve in your research and projects. They are sharing their time, their memories, and their lives with you – be sure to thank them and respect them.
- **Embrace opportunities** for further professional development – conferences, collaborations, volunteering with science outreach. All of these things will help you network and build a diverse range of experiences.
 - **Be ambitious**. Take on opportunities where you'll meet new people and try new things outside of your comfort zone.
- **Attend department events and take advantage of university resources**. Take the lead in figuring out what you want or need from graduate school, postdoc training, and jobs

beyond academics, and take advantage of the resources and opportunities available to you.

- **Support your colleagues:** take the time to listen to them, go to coffee or a happy hour with them, attend events or presentations they organize. Discuss your successes and failures. They are your support network through grad school and beyond.
- **Self-Care:** Maintain your friendships, outside hobbies and routines, and your health. Graduate school is overwhelming and can quickly take over your life. Get a good night's sleep. Your health and well-being should still be priorities!
- Be attuned to your **mental health**. Anxiety and stress can creep up on you. Please reach out if you're overwhelmed or need assistance. (Resources: [RHSE](#) counselling, [SGS](#) wellness resources, [U of T Health and Wellness](#))
- Don't undervalue what you've learned here. (e.g., "I've only taken one class in this specialization.") Sell your strengths and keep a running list of your strengths & experiences on your portfolio/resume/LinkedIn.
- **Ask questions ASAP when you get stuck or confused.** It's better to ask early on, rather than staying stuck and not being able to continue on.

Accommodations and Accessibility

The [Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities](#) affirms that "the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community." To support this aim, students can learn more about accommodations processes and access support via [Accessibility Services](#).

Personal Time Off

Summary

The School of Graduate Studies (SGS) recently updated their [Personal Time Off Policy](#), which applies to students in any research-centered graduate program or any full-time professional program with a duration longer than 12 months.

The basic rules for Molecular Genetics are as follows:

- Graduate students are entitled to 15 days (three work weeks) of personal time off per year.
- Supervisors must allow a student to take their 15 days, usually when and as requested by the student. In rare exceptions the supervisor may need to negotiate dates if there is a time sensitive and mission-critical task that cannot be adjusted.
- Students are responsible for giving sufficient notice. It is not acceptable for a student to plan time off that disrupts their ability to complete their coursework or other relevant work that has a deadline (e.g. scholarship applications).
- It should not be a student's responsibility to keep the lab operations going such that they are not able to leave (i.e. maintaining cells for an entire lab). However, the student *is* responsible for ensuring that animals, cells, or reagents critical to their own project will be maintained in their absence by coordinating with the PI and others in the lab well in advance.

- It is not acceptable for a student to plan time off that disrupts their ability to complete their coursework or other relevant work that has a clear deadline (e.g. scholarship applications).
- The following do **NOT** count toward personal time off:
 - Sick days.
 - Weekends.
 - University holidays (days when the university is closed including the two-week winter holiday).
 - Holidays not observed by the university (when advance notice is given).
 - Time spent in class or preparing large course assignments.
 - Time spent preparing for reclassification/qualification exams.
 - Time spent preparing for committee meetings. (*We encourage supervisors to clearly set expectations for how long it should take to prepare for a meeting.*)
 - Days at conferences and technical workshops related to one's work, including travel/to from.
 - The departmental retreat including travel to/from.
 - Lab/PI-organized retreats and excursions including lab picnics.
 - Time spent doing departmental outreach activities including graduate recruitment days and the career symposium.

Full Policy and Guidelines

SGS policy states that students are entitled to at least 15 personal time off ('vacation') days per year (three M-F work weeks). This departmental policy complies with the SGS guidelines but is intended to be more specific for our program and a few important decisions about implementation are being left to individual labs.

Having a transparent and clearly stated policy that is consistently applied across all students in the lab will go a long way in preventing conflicts when potential issues arise. Students should not be surprised by the rules established by their supervisor, and they should see that the policy is applied equitably. Supervisors should not change the enforcement of this policy based on, e.g., upcoming grant deadlines and lab funding.

We also encourage supervisors to formalize and communicate their leave policies because it is consistent with the type of practice students will experience in the workplace after graduation.

From the SGS Personal Time Off Policy:

"Your supervisor is required to accommodate your request for personal time off. If there are disagreements regarding the details of the time off, or scheduling time off, please engage with your graduate coordinator, graduate chair, or program director, who will help you negotiate your time off with your research supervisor. You may also discuss your time off with members of your supervisory committee."

Managing disruption: The supervisor is required to accommodate requests for personal time off, but they can negotiate specifics under exceptional circumstances. Supervisors should give clear reasons, backed by their own written policy, if they deny a specific request at a specific time.

Supervisors should ask that students communicate time away from lab well in advance, preferably as soon as the student has made their plans. For planned absences of more than a day or two, students should give their supervisors and lab mates at least two weeks advance notice.

Students in labs that have tricky high-maintenance projects should be encouraged to plan and communicate personal time off as far in advance as they can. Supervisors should have contingency plans in place so that no single student is essential for the critical operation of the lab, even if that means the supervisor themselves must do bench work for a period of time. Essentially, it is not the responsibility of the student to forego a vacation to maintain projects for others in the lab.

However, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure their own research projects are not affected by their personal vacation days, and it is their responsibility to hand off key duties during their absence (e.g., making necessary advance arrangements about how their biological materials will be maintained during their absence).

Religious holidays: We must avoid situations where only ‘university sanctioned’ religious holidays are deemed worthy of observance. Supervisors and students should communicate with each other well in advance about any religious observances that are not observed by the University, and what time will be required for their observance. Supervisors must accommodate any religious observance that they have been made aware of with sufficient notice. Supervisors should act in accordance with the university’s guidance on [Accommodations for Religious Observances](#), and are recommended to consult the example dates.

Scientific conferences, workshops, retreats: Days spent at conferences, technical workshops related to their project, the annual career symposium, graduate recruitment days (presenting their data or representing the lab), and retreats are not personal days. Time spent in travel to/from conferences are also not counted as personal time. Days before or after a conference that students take to explore and vacation should usually count as personal days.

Professional activities: Many students participate in Science Rendezvous, SciHigh, and other outreach or professional development programs. We encourage supervisors to allow their students to participate in these types of activities without sacrificing personal days. Supervisors may want to be up front and limit the number of days their students spend on outreach and science education projects (departmental recommendation is 10 days per year).

Time that students spend working toward a career unrelated to their project or Molecular Genetics degree (e.g. a week-long training workshop in management or commerce, preparing for the MCAT or LSAT, etc.) should count as personal time off.

Lab outings: Lab retreats, outings, and picnics that are organized or endorsed by the supervisor will not count as personal days. If students in a lab decide amongst themselves to go to Canada’s Wonderland for a day, it is appropriate that they use their personal time off to do so.

Study and writing time: Preparation for committee meetings, studying for reclass and core/topic courses, and writing papers for publication will not count toward personal time taken away from the lab, though it is acceptable for supervisors to ask students to show their progress on the manuscript every few days. While many students can accomplish these tasks relatively efficiently (e.g., assembling their committee reports and associated slides within two or three days), others may have less experience or be uncertain about the appropriate level of effort and time to invest. It therefore may be helpful for the supervisor to discuss reasonable timeframes, check in on progress, and provide support and guidance as needed.

Teaching: Students may take some time from lab to serve as a TA on a course, and the time devoted toward being a TA should be discussed separately between the supervisor and student without personal time being considered. In general, serving as a TA, and any other ‘job’ roles outside of the lab should be considered in the context of the School of Graduate Studies expectation that students engage with their graduate studies as a full-time occupation. If a TA role or other commitment conflicts with this expectation, use of personal days can be considered.

Sick days: Days taken from lab work due to illness are not counted as personal days. Although a supervisor may ask a student to provide a medical note from a physician (which includes the duration or expected duration of the absence and the date the student was seen by a health care professional), the supervisor should be mindful that this can place hardship on the student (e.g. financial burden or the student being too sick to visit a health professional). We instead encourage a discussion between the supervisor and student to help create a culture of trust. Supervisors should proceed carefully, maintain student privacy, and assume nothing. Students cannot be asked to provide information about the diagnosis or treatment of a medical condition unless there is a workplace-associated hazard involved (e.g., an immunocompromised student must inform a PI of their condition if the lab works with a dangerous pathogen).

If there are concerns about absence from the lab, supervisors or students are advised to contact the graduate team for advice. In some cases, they may be able to connect the student with supports through Accessibility Services or determine whether absences may merit the student taking a formal leave of absence.

Leaves of absence: Formal leaves of absence do not apply to personal time off as students on leave are not receiving a stipend. Their available leave days are ‘frozen’ during the duration of the leave and resume when they return.

Carryover: Supervisors should set a clear ‘start date’ for the annual turnover of personal days. The department suggests labs use the calendar year, January to December, because students start in labs in January after rotations. Supervisors should consider allowing ‘carryover’ of a few unused personal days for to the next year; five days may be a reasonable baseline. However, supervisors should not allow students to bank large amounts of personal time off. Vacation time should be spread evenly throughout a student’s career; students should not go a long time without a vacation.

Monitoring and compliance: The Department has no ability to monitor attendance outside of courses. It is left to individual supervisors to decide if personal days beyond 15 per year are allowed and encourage them to state their lab policy clearly in writing and apply it consistently across all members of the lab.

Leave of Absence

Graduate students may experience a temporary or permanent interruption during their studies. If it may be necessary to take time out from the graduate program the students should make an appointment to see the Learning Strategist or Graduate Coordinator as soon as possible. An official leave of absence is not included in the time limit for completion of the degree, and a student is exempt from paying fees for the duration of the leave. However, some benefits may cease during the leave, so it is important to plan accordingly. The Graduate Coordinator and Learning Strategist can help students to navigate the application for a leave of absence. See the [SGS website](#) for more information.

A student may apply to the Graduate Coordinator for a one-session to three-session leave during the program of study for the following reasons:

- Serious health or personal problems which temporarily make it impossible to continue in the program, or
- Parental leave by either parent at the time of pregnancy, birth or adoption, and/or to provide full-time care during the child's first year. Parental leave must be completed within twelve months of the date of birth or custody. Where both parents are graduate students taking leave, the combined total number of sessions may not exceed four sessions. Students should consult with their Supervisors on this point, as some funding agencies have provisions to allow for paid parental leave.
- [See below](#) for information on the use of Leaves of Absence for internships

Leaves should ideally coincide with the start and end of a session. A leave should therefore begin on the first day of term, for a period of four, eight or twelve months. The degree time limit will be extended by the number of sessions that the student is on leave. If it is necessary for a leave to begin in mid-session, special arrangements will need to be discussed.

While on leave, students are temporarily withdrawn from the graduate program and do not pay fees for the leave period. Please consult the Fees section of the SGS web site for more information on fees for students on a Leave of Absence. If a student returns from leave and is immediately ready to defend the thesis, fees are charged for the session(s) in which the student was on leave.

Supports on Leave (RIHSE, SGS)

Students are not paid a stipend during a Leave of Absence. However, the Research, Innovation & Health Science Education office in the Temerty Faculty of Medicine, jointly with the department, provides a Leave of Absence (LOA) Stipendiary Fund to support students for one term who have requested an LOA due to health issues. Please contact the Learning Strategist to apply for this Fund. [Parental Grants](#) are also available to students who are taking a parental leave. Visit the School of Graduate Studies website for details.

During a leave, a student may not make demands on the resources of the University, such as using library facilities, attending courses, or expecting advice from a Supervisor/Supervisory Committee. Research Reader privileges are available at the library for a fee, and a student may make individual arrangements to consult with faculty and Supervisors. Students also have the option of opting into receiving access to [Student Life](#), [Hart House](#), and [Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education](#) services for a fee (see [Understanding Leaves of Absence from SGS](#)).

Extended health coverage from the U of T Graduate Students Union (UTGSU) is also paused during a leave, and if a leave takes place during Winter term, the pause will generally extend through the following Summer term. Students may be able to coordinate coverage bridging with UTGSU, and should discuss with the Learning Strategist.

Students are not eligible for graduate awards during a leave. Note that award granting agencies, such as CIHR and NSERC, have their own leave policies for award holders. Students must consult with the appropriate funding agency.

If a student requires a leave, it is necessary to complete the [Request for Leave of Absence form](#) available on the SGS website and to submit it to the Graduate Administrator for the Graduate Coordinator to sign.

Guidance on Internships

Some educational programs feature (or facilitate) internships, co-ops, or placements (hereafter referred to collectively as “internships”). These are periods of work experience relevant to the field of study. Depending on the academic program and the host, these periods can vary in duration from a few weeks (e.g. during a summer break) to over a year. They can be paid or unpaid; full-time or part-time. The Department understands the value that internships have for student career goals. They often lead to future employment.

Internships within Molecular Genetics MSc/PhD program

The Molecular Genetics MSc/PhD program (the “Program”) does not have a formal internship feature. In fact, such opportunities, wherein the student is hired and/or paid (usually by a company), will not be considered within the Program. Instead, a leave of absence (LOA) is required.

The Program, and the responsibilities agreed to by both the thesis supervisor and the student, are inconsistent with full-time internships or co-op placements. First, the program itself was designed, approved, and continues to be funded as a continuous, full-time endeavor. Second, the research stipend and tuition are typically paid by the supervisor using grant funding that can only be used to compensate researchers working on the project. Students holding independent research funding (e.g. from NSERC or CIHR) should verify impacts of an internship, as some awards will assume a full-time research and study program.

It should also be considered that students in the Program typically work as part of an integrated research team, continued success of which depends on full commitment of each team member. Even when individual projects are largely independent, the overall funding of a laboratory will depend on timely completion of individual projects.

As well, intellectual property policies of the institution apply to the Program. Use of research information should follow standard academic practices. Data and project-specific knowledge derived from the student's thesis project may not necessarily be available for use in an internship.

In order to minimize impact to both research labs and degree progress, it is expected that students that intend to pursue internships follow these guidelines:

- (1) To avoid compromising progress on the thesis project, a full-time internship should ideally be no longer than one term, and arranged during a time that does not compromise the research – e.g. while a paper is submitted, while awaiting a key result from a collaborator, or just after the “permission to write” meeting, at which point all experiments should be completed. Students are also encouraged to take summer internships, as there are fewer structured departmental and program activities.
- (2) Students must discuss the internship with their supervisor and with the Learning Strategist, at least one term (four months) in advance of the start of the intended internship, so that it can be planned in a way that facilitates progress towards the degree and lab functioning.
- (3) Internships should be pursued only after the student has achieved PhD candidacy (i.e. completed all coursework, including seminar attendance and presentations – normally, only students beyond their fourth academic year will meet this expectation).
- (4) Students doing an internship are expected to take a Leave of Absence (LOA), unless they have completed all degree requirements except for the defense (see below). The LOA is granted by SGS, not the Department. Please note that SGS policy currently interprets personal hardship very broadly especially when in line with department and academic goals. Additional information and links to the LOA Form are found at <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/resources-supports/understanding-leaves-of-absence/>. Please indicate that the LOA is being requested for the purpose of an Internship when completing the form.
- (5) Students must be familiar with the terms of the LOA:
 - a. Students will not have access to their supervisor's lab, or their supervisor, the library, gym, other campus facilities, etc. during the LOA. Students on LOA can, however, pay to opt-in to certain services as described on the LOA form.
 - b. The stipend and tuition will be suspended during the LOA, and the time on leave will not be counted as part of the length of the degree.
 - c. The LOA assures students that their place in the academic program will be preserved, but students cannot expect that important lab project(s) will be put completely on hold. Thus, an unfinished thesis project may be impacted by research developments that occur during the LOA. Students should discuss the implications of the LOA on the project with the supervisor.
- (6) Students doing an internship should be aware of conflict-of-interest (CoI) rules. If the internship is in the same area as their PhD project, they must discuss with the supervisor what aspects of unpublished work in the laboratory should be considered confidential and of potential value to the lab and the University. Students should be aware that violating

CoI and/or confidentiality presents a potential liability for the company or organization sponsoring the internship.

- (7) Because Leaves of Absence are intended as a pause from academic progress, work generated during an internship cannot be incorporated into students' theses. Theses should only include work produced under the supervision of U of T graduate faculty members during terms in which the student is registered.
- (8) Students who have completed all degree requirements except for the defense can forfeit the stipend and start a job. Students taking an internship under such circumstances should not take a Leave of Absence, because it would prevent them from graduating.
- (9) International students should be aware that there may be visa, immigration and post-graduation issues relevant to an LOA and paid employment outside the University. Please ensure you meet with an Immigration Advisor at the Centre for International Experience prior to requesting an LOA.
- (10) If you have government student loans (e.g., OSAP), a leave of absence can impact your funding and your repayment status. Contact the University Registrar's Office at <http://uoft.me/client-services> to discuss your options.
- (11) The above guidelines do not apply to students who engage in external industry-facing collaborative work as part of their research toward their dissertation. For example, some students may receive a MITACS funded grant as part of an agreement between their host lab and a biotech company that involves a period spent working with the industry partner. Students in these situations do not need to apply for a LOA. They will typically receive their normal stipend, must pay tuition, and should not be formally paid or hired by the partner (although additional housing costs while visiting the industry partner are usually covered by the grant or the partner). Students in these situations must remain current in terms of seminars, coursework, committee meetings, and other aspects of their degree program. Intellectual property concerns are usually negotiated between the head of the lab and the industry partner (with the guidance of the funding agency and the University) and the terms of the agreement should be clearly communicated to the student.

Additional references

For more information on intellectual property ownership, students and supervisors in the Program are encouraged to review the intellectual property experiential learning modules in the following link: <https://experientialmodules.utoronto.ca/intellectual-property/>

Students and supervisors are also encouraged to review the *Working Group on Graduate Student Involvement in Research Opportunities with Industry, Findings & Recommendations* (<https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/253/2020/12/WGROI-Final-Report-Sept-18-2020.pdf>) and the *Researcher's Guide to Industry Partnerships* (<https://research.utoronto.ca/partnerships/establish-partnership-industry>).

Use of Emergency Contact Information

Students are expected to maintain regular contact throughout their programs. Should a student's supervisor indicate to the Department that they are unable to contact them despite making reasonable efforts to do so, the Department will make additional efforts to get in touch, to maintain academic progress and verify well-being. To assist in this process, the Department asks

students to provide additional contact information, including a phone number, a non-U of T email, and 1-2 emergency contacts, through an Emergency Contact Form.

Standard communication from the Department will make use of students' U of T or node-based email addresses, or phone as needed. A non-U of T email provided on the Emergency Contact Form will only be used in circumstances where we are otherwise unable to reach a student. Emergency contacts will only be used after the supervisor and the Department have been unable to contact the student via email or phone. The emergency contact will be called and/or emailed by a Departmental staff member. We will share with the emergency contact that the student in question is a student in our program and that we have been unable to reach them, and request that the emergency contact verify your well-being and put us in contact with them. No other information—personal or academic—will be shared with this contact. The Emergency Contact Form includes a consent to disclose information, which is in addition to section 42(1)(h) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) which permits the University to disclose personal information in compelling circumstances affecting the health or safety of an individual.

The contact information provided in the Emergency Contact Form will be treated as strictly confidential and will be saved on a secure SharePoint site accessible only to Departmental staff members (not faculty) on a strict need-to-know basis. We ask students to alert their emergency contact(s) that they have provided their information.

Students are under no obligation to complete the Emergency Contact Form and provide consent; their decision to complete or decline to complete will have no effect on any official University outcomes.

Termination of Registration/Withdrawal

A student's registration in the program may be terminated without obtaining a degree under the following circumstances:

1. Failure to achieve the goals set by the Supervisory Committee within a reasonable period of time (see "[Lack of Sufficient Progress](#)"); and upon unanimous decision by the Supervisory Committee.
2. Failing any course in the program.
3. Two negative votes at a Reclassification exam, MSc Oral exam, PhD Qualification, or PhD Oral exam.
4. Failure to meet the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies [General Regulations](#).

The student's stipend will be terminated upon termination of enrollment.

Lapsed Candidacy

Students must be registered annually until all degree requirements are met, including up through the defence and submission of the final thesis. Students who fail to register and do not have an approved leave may only apply to re-register if they are within the maximum time allowed for the degree program. Students wishing to re-register must apply to the Department of Molecular Genetics, and the Department and the School of Graduate Studies must approve the reinstatement. Reinstated students will be required to pay fees owing for any sessions in which they did not register. Only leaves of absence interrupt this requirement.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources

We understand that many of our students (and staff/faculty) may experience anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges. If you feel that you are struggling, please know that you are not alone and that we have several resources to help.

In crisis, visit the closest Emergency Room or call 911. For suicide-related crises, call 988.

Molecular Genetics maintains a list of resources on our [Health and Wellness page](#). Another great place to start looking for support is the university's [Mental Health](#) page, with an extensive list of mental health and wellness resources.

The **U of T My Student Support Program** (U of T My SSP) provides students with real-time and/or appointment-based confidential, 24-hour support for any school, health, or general life concern at no cost to you. You can call or chat with a counsellor directly from your phone whenever, wherever you are. You can access U of T My SSP 24/7 by calling 1-844-451-9700. Outside of North America, call 001-416-380-6578.

MoGen students have also created a Peer Support Committee, an initiative designed to foster a supportive and inclusive environment for MoGen graduate students. The Peer Support Committee:

- Provides peer mentorship & one-on-one support
- Connects students with academic, mental health, and professional resources
- Organizes workshops, networking events, and wellness initiatives
- Aims to build a stronger, more connected graduate community

Students can contact the MoGen Peer Support Committee via mogenpeersupp@gmail.com

Additional resources were compiled below by the students in the Medical Biophysics Department:

Counselling Services

School of Graduate Studies Embedded Counsellors (free)

During the academic year, RHSE provides dedicated counselors for students in the Faculty of Medicine. Information about these counselors can be found at the RIHSE [On-Site Counselling page](#). The Learning Strategist can also help you to contact these counselors.

Book an appointment for counselling by phone (416-978-8030, Ext. 5, identify yourself as a TFoM grad student) or walk-in at 700 Bay Street, 12th floor.

OISE Psychology Clinic (~\$25/session)

[OISE Psychology Clinic website](#), Phone: 416-978-0620

Location: 371 Bloor Street West, Suite 243

Conflict or Challenges in Professional Relationships

[Centre for Graduate Mentorship & Supervision \(CGMS\)](#)

Email: cgms@utoronto.ca, Phone: 416-978-2379

Community Helplines: 24-hour access to anonymous support (unless otherwise noted)

Good 2 Talk Student Helpline: 1-866-925-5454
Distress Center Hotline: 416-408-4357
Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255
Gerstein Center Mental Health Crisis Line: 416-929-5200
Assaulted Women's Helpline: 416-863-0511
My SSP for International Students: 1-844-451-9700
Anishnawbe Health Mental Health Crisis Line for Aboriginal students: 416-891-8606
Drug and Alcohol Helpline: 1-800-565-8603
Ontario Mental Health Helpline: 1-866-531-2600
Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline: 1-888-230-3505
Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Care Centre: 416-323-6040
Toronto Rape Crisis Centre: 416-597-8808
LGBTQ Youthline (peer support, open Sun-Fri 4-9pm): 1-800-268-9688

Confidentiality

As per University of Toronto guidelines, the Department of Molecular Genetics administration requires the expressed written permission of the student in question before we are able to communicate with people outside of the University of Toronto (parents, other family members etc.) regarding the status of said graduate students in our program.

APPENDICES

A - Handbook Updates

2025b – October 2025

- Policy/process change: The “Grad Team” (advisory faculty at each node) is no longer a formal group, though students are still welcome to consult with faculty at their node for advice.
- Policy/process change: The [deadline for PhD committee meetings](#) in upper years (post-qual/reclass) has been extended from end of May to end of June.
- Policy/process change: If the supervisor has not received a complete thesis draft by the time the defence would be expected, a [Thesis Writing \(‘Post-Terminal’\) meeting](#) should be held.
- Clarification: A [final lab placement](#) must be from among labs a student has rotated in.
- Clarification: In cases of co-supervision, only one Co-Supervisor is required to attend a [Reclass/Qual Exam](#), but both are permitted to attend and vote.
- Clarification: The [Chair for a PhD defence](#) is appointed by SGS; this member does not need to be chosen by the student/supervisor.
- Update: Updates to administrative staff, Designated Examiners, and course coordinators.
- Update: Addition of the [MoGen Peer Support Committee](#)

2025a – January 2025

- Policy/process change: [Committee Meeting evaluation](#) scoring changed from percentile to categorical, “Creativity” removed, “Initiative/Motivation” updated to “Initiative/Leadership”
- Policy/process change: The Exam Chair, rather than the Designated Examiner, is carried over from the Pre-Reclass/Pre-Qual Meeting to the [Reclass/Qual Exam](#)
- Policy/process change: The Department no longer requires hard copies of [theses](#)
- Policy/process change: [Changes to the Supervisory Committee](#) after initial formation are submitted through the same Supervisory Committee Selection form
- Clarification: Maximum [Supervisory Committee size](#) specified as four, including Supervisor(s)
- Clarification: Rephrasing of [Reclassification/Qualification Exam outcomes](#) and clarification of the outcomes after a second attempt.
- Clarification: Later changes to [co-supervision](#) require an updated Co-Supervision Form
- Clarification: Supervisors should contact the department for current funding amounts for [External Examiners](#).
- Correction: Some committee meeting deadlines in “Graduate Curriculum at a Glance” tables updated to align with the body of the Handbook

2024c – July 2024

- Policy/process change: new [Policy on Funding & Program Length](#)
- Policy/process change: new information on the [Use of Emergency Contact Information](#)
- Clarification: updating the language on [Personal Time Off](#) to align with SGS policy

2024b – May 2024

- Policy/process change: extension of stipend coverage if students are expected to conduct experiments during thesis writing

- Policy/process change: addition to the [guidance on internships](#) addressing the use of internship work in theses
- Clarification: [Committee Report format](#) and [timeline of meetings](#)
- Clarification: [seminar attendance requirements](#)
- Clarification: time of day for reclass/qual report submission
- Clarification: reclass/qual exam outcomes
- Clarification: remote defences
- Clarification: required materials for the final oral exam booking form

2024a

- Policy/process change: Minor updates to the requirements to [Supervisory Committee Composition](#)
- Clarification: recommended length of thesis outlines
- Clarification: added information on the deadlines to submit MSc and PhD theses to examiners
- New info: Updated information about the [RHSE LOA Stipendiary Fund](#)
- New info: Updates to [Organizational Structure](#), including re-organization of Designated Examiners

2023c

- Policy/process change: Changes to the process for scheduling a [PhD Final Oral Exam](#)
- Policy/process change: Simplification of the process for the terminal meeting ([MSc/PhD](#)) and receiving permission to write ([MSc/PhD](#))
- Clarification: process for [reclassification/qualification proposal preparation](#)

2023b

- Policy/process change: Expanded details and processes for [Time to Completion \(TTC\) and Post-TTC Meetings for PhD Students](#)
- Policy/process change: Details on the [Graduate Research Integrity Workshop](#), required for new incoming students
- Policy/process change: New guidance and requirements related to [authorship](#)
- Policy/process change: New [guidelines on the use of generative artificial intelligence](#)
- Policy/process change: New [guidance on internships](#)