



**UNIVERSITY OF
GUELPH**

**A Handbook for
Graduate Students in
the Department of
Human Health and
Nutritional Sciences**



2008 - 2009

**Helpful tips to guide you through
your first day to your last day**



Foreword

Congratulations! You're now a University of Guelph Graduate Student in the Department of Human Health and Nutritional Sciences (HHNS). Ranging from nutrition, exercise and metabolism to biomechanics to nutraceutical sciences, HHNS is certainly a dynamic and exciting department to be a part of!

This handbook was created by current graduate students in HHNS for incoming graduate students in HHNS. Its content reflects input from coursework MSc students, thesis MSc students and PhD students from several labs spread across all disciplines in the department of HHNS. It is meant to offer a compilation of useful information to help guide you through your graduate studies, from your first day to your last.

So, again, welcome to HHNS. We hope you enjoy your graduate student experience as much as we have.

-- Justine Tishinsky, Jasna Junuzovic & Meghann Robinson



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I. What it Means to be a Grad Student

Webster's Dictionary simply defines a grad student as *a student who continues studies after graduation*. Although this definition is officially correct, what it means to be a graduate student certainly extends far beyond this description...and so it should.

Unlike undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees require much more independent drive for success from the student. You're no longer a nameless student sitting in a class of 300; you're an individual with a responsibility to your fellow students, your advisor, your department and yourself. This responsibility is not to be taken lightly.

It should be noted that these comments are not meant to intimidate you but rather to provide you with an awareness of what being a graduate student truly means...beyond that of a dictionary's definition.

The important thing to remember is that graduate school should never be viewed as a means to an end. Rather, graduate school represents an opportunity for you, the student, to pursue your love of research and your love of science.

Overall, graduate school is ultimately what you make of it. Shakespeare said it best: *nothing will come of nothing*. So stand up and find a way to get what you came for.



2. HHNS Graduate Programs

1. MSc by Coursework

The MSc Coursework degree involves a one year time commitment. Students register for a minimum of 4.0 credits that includes content and research experiential courses. With their faculty advisor, students can tailor their research courses to best meet their scientific interests. Each research course culminates in communication of the research experience through an oral presentation, written paper and/or a scientific poster. MSc coursework students meet regularly as a group with the MSc coursework program coordinator throughout the year to discuss program-related issues as well as cover scientific-process topics. The MSc coursework program is designed to offer flexibility to students to allow them to create a program that fits their interests and learning objectives.

2. MSc by Thesis

The MSc Thesis degree officially involves a two year (six semester) time commitment. During this degree, students are responsible for the completion of graduate courses in addition to conducting a specific research project.

Thesis based students are responsible for successfully completing 1.5 graduate credits (3 courses) which are typically (but not necessarily) fulfilled during their first year of study. They are also required to complete and defend a specific thesis project.



This project comprises scientifically defensible account of the student's research on a particular, well-defined research hypothesis. This project is discussed and developed with the guidance of the student's advisory committee. The project typically fits within the niche of the advisor's research area, and the advisor may or may not have a specific project in mind for his or her student. That said, it is very important for the student to contribute to the direction of the project as, ultimately, it defines the nature of his or her MSc thesis. It should also be noted that the thesis project requires a substantial amount of background research, knowledge, passion, dedication and hard work from the student themselves. The advisory committee exists to assist in the overall guidance of the project; the rest remains the responsibility of the student.

3. PhD

The PhD degree officially involves a nine semester time commitment (beyond that of the MSc) and is primarily devoted to research. There is no official coursework requirement; however, many students do complete some coursework that is determined through discussion with the student's advisory committee. Students are also required to complete a qualifying exam (see PhD Qualifying Exam). PhD students must submit and defend their original research at the completion of their degree. The underlying goals of a PhD degree centre on the idea that PhD students gain a high level of understanding and skill in their field of study. At the completion of their degree, students should have the potential to function effectively as a faculty member or in a position of responsibility in industry or government where their duties are comprehensive in nature.



3. Courses

What do I take?

1. *MSc by Coursework*: a total of 4.0 credits required

Students must complete the following: (a) HBNS*6010 (b) HBNS*6320 (c) At least one of HBNS*6910, HBNS*6920, HBNS*6930 (d) at least one of HBNS*6040 or HBNS*6700 or HBNS*6200 (e) 1.0 to 2.0 additional credit(s).

2. *MSc by Thesis*: a total of 1.5 credits required

Students must complete the following: (a) one of HBNS*6040 (directed towards students focussed on nutrition and nutraceutical sciences), HBNS*6700 (directed towards students focussed on nutrition, energy and metabolism) or HBNS*6200 (directed towards students focussed on biomechanics), (b) 1.0 additional credit.

**It is important to discuss course selections with your advisor/advisory committee - as particular courses may be of specific importance to you.

3. *PhD*:

Course requirements for a PhD student vary and are determined between the student and his/her advisory committee.

**When do I take it?**

Which semesters you choose to complete your course requirements is a decision that should be made in conjunction with your advisor. Depending on the nature of your research project, it may be logical to either condense your coursework or spread it out over the duration of your graduate work. Regardless, it is important to remember that graduate courses are offered in specific semesters only; therefore, look ahead when you're planning what to take when .

When/how do I register?

Course registration takes place in the middle of each semester for the next upcoming semester. All courses can be registered for online using Webadvisor.

NOTE: in addition to registering for your selected courses, it is mandatory to register for either full- or part-time graduate studies (UNIV*7510 or UNIV*7520, respectively). If you are not enrolling in any courses for that semester, you must also enrol in UNIV*7500 (research/writing).



4. Funding

Guaranteed Stipend for *Domestic* Students (as of Spring, 2008)

MSc (thesis) = \$17 660/year

PhD = \$18 500/year

**These stipends are guaranteed for the fixed number of eligible semesters for each program *only* (6 for thesis MSc and 9 for PhD)

**If the student does not obtain any external awards, stipends for MSc (thesis) and PhD are paid in full by the advisor's funding in combination with one GTA (see below). Students who receive substantial external funding (i.e. NSERC, CIHR) may also receive an additional \$5000 top up on their award and are still guaranteed a GTA.

Guaranteed Stipend for *International* Students (as of Spring, 2008)

MSc (thesis) = ~ \$20 648/year

PhD = ~ \$21 488/year

Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA)

Full GTA (1.0) ~ \$5000

Half GTA (0.5) ~ \$2500

Each MSc (thesis) and PhD student is guaranteed one full GTA per school year and this is included as part of their stipend. If a student is able to attain more than one full GTA per year, that compensation is compounded *on top* of their regular stipend. In a nutshell, this means more money!



GTA's must be applied for through the department (positions are listed on the HHNS website) and all Teaching Assistants are unionized through the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). HHNS grad students can also apply for GTA positions in other departments on campus.

**Although eligible to apply, MSc coursework students are rarely awarded a GTA.

Graduate Service Assistantships (GSA)

This assistantship may be awarded for work related to the academic enterprise such as invigilating midterms/exams, marking undergraduate research projects/literature reviews or for work that does not directly relate to academics.

Students are compensated hourly for their contributions, and the rates are set by Human Resources for the appropriate nature of the work (up to ~\$35/hour).

NOTE: Jobs around the department (invigilating, marking) only come up every so often, so keep an eye out for email notifications.

Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA)

This is the official name for the stipend students receive from their advisor. In full, this assistantship is awarded to students through research grants received by faculty from external agencies or government and must be used to contribute to the research of the faculty member. Students do not apply for these awards but, rather, they are recommended by their advisor to the department chair who must approve the GRA. The amount received is dependent on the external granting agencies.

(GRA + GTA = Stipend)



External Funding

There are several sources of external funding including the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS), Ontario Graduate Scholarship in Science and Technology (OGSST), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario (HSFO). These awards tend to be tailored towards a specific area of research (e.g. CIHR = health related research), with the exception of OGS and NSERC which are broader in nature.

Students can choose to apply for these awards that typically amount to the same or more money as the guaranteed stipend. If a student is successful in receiving an award, then the faculty advisor is obliged to provide funds so the combination of the scholarship and the GRA is at least 2000 dollars more than the minimum stipend. These awards not only provide financial support but they also look great on a CV, so all students are highly encouraged to apply.

Application packages for these awards typically include transcripts (free from Academic Services if specified for an award), letters of recommendation, a CV, research interests, research goals, etc. The application deadlines for the awards vary but tend to occur throughout October to December. The University of Guelph holds information seminar sessions in September for each award to update students on the application process, any changes from previous years, eligibility, etc. It is very useful to attend these seminars, especially for first time applicants. To determine the times and locations of these seminars, check out <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/graduatestudies/index.cfm?finance/extawards>



Internal Awards/Bursaries/Travel Grants

1. College of Biological Science Internal Awards:

Numerous awards are offered through the College of Biological Sciences. They are listed on this website. Some awards are department specific while others are college-wide. Check out this link for more information:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/gradawards/gradawards-cbs.shtml>

2. University-Wide Internal Awards:

There is a large list of awards available from the university. Students are encouraged to check them out and apply where appropriate. The awards are listed on the following webpage:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/gradawards/gradawards-uwia.shtml>

3. Other Travel Grant Possibilities:

Conferences usually have travel grants and awards designated for graduate students to encourage student participation. These awards are typically offered by the societies participating in the conference. Students are encouraged to research all the awards being offered at conferences they are attending and apply to the ones they are eligible for.

Additionally, HHNS has an award to support travel for research purposes to the University of Copenhagen, University of Maastricht or the Universities in Melbourne that students are welcome to apply for.



5. Student-Advisor Relationship

What does your advisor expect from you?

Each faculty advisor has different expectations for their students; therefore, it is absolutely critical for the student to enquire and fully understand what is expected of them from their advisor. Common issues to enquire about include the hours that you're expected to work, whether or not you're expected to be present in the department during regular business hours, what specific lab duties are expected of you, the frequency of lab meetings which you need to attend, etc.

What should you expect from your advisor?

Your advisor is responsible for providing guidance and direction for you throughout the course of your graduate degree. He or she is responsible for ensuring you're properly trained and for assisting with the development and progression of your research project. If you have concerns regarding any element of your graduate degree, your advisor represents the person to whom you can address those concerns.

**Generally speaking, the key to a successful student-advisor relationship rests in sound communication. It is of vital importance to develop an effective system of correspondence with your advisor and to maintain this correspondence from the first day of your degree to the last.



6. Advisory Committee

What is it?

Your advisory committee consists of your advisor as well as a minimum of one (for MSc students) or a minimum of two (for PhD students) additional faculty members. Your advisory committee exists to assist with the planning and progression of your research project(s). Most students will plan to have semi-regular advisory committee meetings to update their committee members on their research progress and obtain guidance with the overall direction of their research project(s). These meetings are often extremely valuable so it is advantageous to arrive prepared with questions and ideas regarding your project. The members of your advisory committee will also read your thesis and their approval is normally required before you're able to defend your graduate work. The individuals comprising your advisory committee can be amended over the course of your graduate studies if needed.

When/how do I get one?

Your advisor will often have ideas regarding whom your advisory committee should consist of. It is usually best to have committee members with a comprehensive understanding of your area of research. After consulting with your advisor, you can approach the additional faculty member(s) and ask if they'll agree to serve on your advisory committee.



Typically, students will receive a form requesting the names of the faculty members comprising their advisory committee (along with the courses they plan to take to fulfil their coursework requirements) by the end of their first semester. Students are required to have this form completed in its entirety and submitted by the middle of their second semester of study.

7. Your Graduate Students' Association (GSA)

What is it?

The GSA is your representation as a graduate student at the University of Guelph. All full-time and part-time students enrolled in graduate studies are a part of the GSA and eligible to benefit from any applicable services offered by the GSA.

What can it do for me?

When all the days seem to blend into one, the *free* daytimer provided by your GSA can certainly come in handy. Daytimers are available at the beginning of the fall semester from the GSA office (5th floor University Centre).

Bus pass stickers (included in the price of your tuition) are also available from the GSA.



The GSA also proudly offers a place for students to socialize, grab a bite or have a drink, commonly known as the Grad Lounge. The Grad Lounge (also located on the 5th floor of the University Centre) offers *very* affordable prices on food and drinks and represents a fabulous location to mingle with other graduate students. Be sure to check it out!

The GSA provides both health and dental plans for eligible graduate students. The fees for both plans are included in your tuition, and students have the option of opting out of the dental plan if they wish. Specific conditions apply for eligibility; please see their website for additional details: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/gsa/healthdental.cfm>

The GSA offers various forms of financial assistance, as well as resources for almost every need. For more information, check out their website at: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/gsa/services.cfm>

How do I get involved?

There are numerous ways by which graduate students can get involved with the GSA. The GSA has both an elected Executive Board of Directors, as well as representatives from each department. To learn more about opportunities to contribute, inquire at the GSA office.



8. Student Involvement

Graduate Representative Position

The graduate representative is an individual who is nominated and elected by their fellow graduate students each October. The grad rep must accept their nomination from their peers in order to take the position. The rep is responsible for attending faculty meetings and graduate committee meetings, as well as acting as a liaison between the faculty and graduate body. The rep addresses the concerns of the graduate students to the faculty and provides feedback to the students regarding faculty decisions and any changes in the department that may affect the students. In addition, the graduate rep is also encouraged to organize student activities in order to increase student involvement as well as student-faculty interactions. The rep may also choose to undertake the organization of charity events within the department.

Department Seminar Series

HHNS offers a department seminar series each semester that is open to all faculty members and students. The seminar speakers include both faculty and graduate students from within our department and university as well as external to our department and university. The seminars represent an excellent opportunity for students to broaden their educational horizons and learn what other faculty members and students are studying in similar disciplines. Graduate student attendance at departmental seminars is highly encouraged.

**Additional seminars are also offered by other departments on campus and are often worth checking out as well.



9. Questions? A Who's Who of People to go to for Guidance

1. Graduate/Undergraduate Secretary: Andra Williams

Email address: amwillia@uoguelph.ca

Office: ANNU 352, ext 56356

Andra's specific responsibilities include:

- any and all graduate student questions/ information
- any and all graduate student related forms and documents
- NSERC/OGS/CIHR departmental contact
- petty cash
- web manager

2. Accounting Clerk: Ann Stride

Email address: astride@uoguelph.ca

Office: ANNU 352, ext 56169

Ann's specific responsibilities include:

- administering keys to grad students (\$25.00 deposit required)
- ordering lab supplies (this form is available in room 341 and must be signed by your advisor or someone in your lab with signing privileges)
- handles all packing slips of orders received

3. Administrative Assistant: Anne Lovett-Hutchinson

Email address: alovett@uoguelph.ca

Office: ANNU 353, ext 56171

Anne's specific responsibilities include:

- Pay cheques pick-up and inquiries for GTAs/ GSAs/GRAs



- Notification to grad students if you have a package at the loading dock
- GTA/GSA positions contact person
- Additionally, Anne acts as the administrative assistant for the Chair of the department and, therefore, can be very helpful if you need to book an appointment with the Chair

4. Graduate Coordinator: Dr. Lawrence Spriet

Email address: lspriet@uoguelph.ca

Office: ANNU 348, ext 53745

5. Assistant Graduate Coordinator: Dr. Alison Duncan

Email address: amduncan@uoguelph.ca

Office: ANNU 347, ext 53416

6. Chair: Dr. Terry Graham

Email address: terrygra@uoguelph.ca

Office: ANNU 354, ext 56168

10. Expenses

If students have expenses up to \$100.00, they can be refunded through the “petty cash fund” by Andra Williams. If expenses are greater than \$100.00, then an expense form must be completed, signed by the student’s advisor and submitted to Ann Stride. Expenses may include conference fees, supplies for your study, etc. These expenses *must* be approved by your advisor before they can be claimed and receipts must be kept and submitted.



11. Workspace

For many new graduate students, it is difficult at first to find a place where you feel comfortable, especially if Guelph is a new school for you! Depending on the lab you're working in, there may or may not be adequate workspace available for reading, writing, computer work, etc. Also, as we all know, you can't have any much-needed coffee or food in most of these labs.

The Branion Room (located on the 3rd floor of ANNU) is a great alternative if you are looking for a place to get some reading, writing or just plain relaxing done. There is a fridge and microwave located in this room, as well as comfy couches, work desks and chairs for grad student use. There is also wireless internet available!

There are also additional rooms that you can request a workspace in from Andra Williams. There are lockers located in some of these rooms that you can keep your valuables in.

If you find you need a change of location and would like to branch out further than our building, then you can reserve a room in the McLaughlin building. These study offices are only assigned to graduate students (while preparing for their qualifying exam and/or final thesis), faculty and librarians. To apply for a closed study office you may contact Donna Sartori at extension 52301 or fill out the online application: http://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/research/study_space/study_office_application.cfm



12. The Transition from MSc to PhD

Who is eligible to make the transition?

During the MSc thesis program, the student's advisory committee may offer the student the option to transfer or "fast-track" into a PhD program without fully completing the MSc degree. Also, the student may express interest in fast-tracking once his or her graduate work has commenced. Note – the transfer is a recommendation from the student's *entire* advisory committee - not just the advisor.

Why make the transition?

If you're thoroughly enjoying your MSc and aspire to develop your project further, then you may choose to consider pursuing a PhD degree. If you do decide to continue on with graduate studies, then fast-tracking represents one option to enter into a PhD program. Depending on the nature of your research project, it may be more logical to extend your MSc project into a PhD project instead of defining your MSc project as a unique entity of research.

How do I make the transition?

Firstly, there needs to be an agreement between the student and his or her advisor that fast-tracking into a PhD is the best step for the student. Afterwards, the student completes an application form for a transfer of program. The application requires letters of recommendation for the transfer, as well as superior academic standing over the last two years (usually accepted as an A- average or higher).



The application is reviewed by the departmental graduate studies committee and then forwarded to the Graduate Admissions Officer who, providing the application is judged as successful, will issue an offer of admission to the student.

When do I make the transition?

The transfer form is typically submitted in the student's fourth semester of study; however, it can also be submitted in the third semester if this is in the student's best interest.

The Pros and Cons

Pros:

1. You may potentially achieve your PhD in less time (via fast-tracking)
2. You may continue working on a project you love
3. You get to stay in school
4. You get paid
5. You are in a self-motivated job where you make your own hours

Cons:

1. If you fast-track and fail to complete your PhD, you may be unable to transfer back into a MSc.
2. The financial compensation is minimal
3. You work irregular hours
4. You stay in school instead of getting a high-paying job
5. You may not like your project
6. It can be stressful when your project is not going well



I3. PhD Qualifying Exam

1. What is it?

The qualifying exam is typically an oral assessment (it can sometimes have a written component as well) that each PhD student must successfully complete in order to maintain their status as a PhD candidate and to defend their PhD thesis.

2. Its purpose

The official purpose of this exam is to demonstrate the student's competency of knowledge and command of research in specific areas. The qualifying exam may also serve to identify the academic areas that the student needs to strengthen in order to deem himself or herself as an excellent PhD candidate. Although the format remains relatively consistent from student to student, the exam is tailored specifically towards each student and, therefore, no test is identical.

3. When it happens

The exam normally takes place within the first 5 semesters of the PhD program. Students who have fast-tracked from an MSc into a PhD generally complete the test during the 4th or 5th semester after he or she transferred into the PhD program. However, this timeline is not absolute and can be modified depending on the student's research.

4. Committee

The qualifying exam has an examining committee consisting of five scientists/researchers/faculty members (including the chair of the exam), each one being an expert in one of the topics chosen for the test. This committee is chosen by the student and his/her PhD committee and requires the approval of the graduate committee.



The examining committee does not need to be comprised of the same people as the PhD advisory committee but must have a minimum of two common members.

5. Structure

The exam is composed of four different topics that are often related to the student's field of research. These topics can, but aren't required to be, interrelated to one another. The topics are chosen by the student and his/her PhD committee. Each examiner will present the student with a list of readings for their topic. The list can range from textbook chapters to primary journal articles to review articles, etc. The list can be as long as the examiner wishes but generally ranges between 15-30 papers per topic. In some cases, an examiner may choose not to provide a reading list but, rather, ask the student to comprise their own.

6. Preparation

Students typically take 8-10 weeks to prepare for the exam. Be careful to allocate a sufficient amount of time for each topic and to allow for interaction with the examiners. Do *not* leave studying until the last minute! It is very important to stay in contact with each examiner throughout your preparation period. Try to contact each examiner at least once, face-to-face if possible, to make sure you're on the right track with your studying. Face-to-face contact may also encourage the examiner to emphasize key points. Additionally, it is highly recommended that you conduct practice seminars for each of your topics. This will help identify the areas you're well prepared in and those that still require some additional work.



7. Stress management

You will get stressed. Make sure you take time off from studying for fun. Don't quit! You haven't worked this hard to simply give up! It may also be advantageous to talk to someone about the test, such as your advisor, the graduate coordinator, other students, friends, family, etc.

8. Test day

Get a good night sleep before the test. Calm yourself down and eat a good meal, as the test is quite lengthy. It is often recommended to discontinue studying one day prior to the test to allow the information to "sink-in".

9. Composition of the test

This is typically an oral exam. In the test room, there will be four examiners, a chair and possibly your advisor. The test consists of two parts. In the first part, each examiner will have 20 minutes to ask the student questions. These questions may be as specific or as abstract as the examiner wishes, but they are usually broader-concept, research type questions. It is not uncommon for the student to be asked to step up to the blackboard and lecture on a particular topic. During the first part of the test only, only one examiner can pose questions at a time. In the second part, each examiner can choose to have another 20 minutes for questions but, in contrast, there can be input from other examiners at any time. You can choose to have a ten minute break between the two sections of the test. After the test, the student will be asked to leave the room for the committee to deliberate. Afterwards, the student will be called back into the room for the results.

10. After the test

Celebrate. Rest. Take some time off. Then get back to work and finish your PhD!



I4. Writing a Research Paper for Publication

Why Write A Paper:

Writing a paper undoubtedly requires a great deal of time and effort. However, although it entails a significant amount of work, there are several reasons why writing papers is important for grad students:

#1: Research papers are quite literally the currency of research! Papers show potential interviewers, sponsors, etc. that you're serious about what you do!

#2: Writing a paper serves as a means of acknowledging the people, agencies and subjects/ animals that assisted with your project in terms of time and expertise and/or money. It is also important to place careful consideration in the choice of authorship for a paper; this should be discussed with your advisor.

#3: Ultimately, the papers you write for publication purposes become the chapters in your thesis. Therefore, by writing throughout the course of your graduate work, you save yourself the stress of having to write your *entire* thesis at the end of your graduate program!

#4: It provides you with a sense of accomplishment! At times research can be frustrating because it often takes a significant amount of time to complete even the simplest of tasks. Publishing a paper encompassing the handwork you've accomplished provides a feeling of achievement. *You deserve this!*

How to Write a Paper:

Step 1 - Data

Once all the data has been collected for the manuscript, it is important to ensure you fully understand all the results. Take some time to interpret what your results actually mean and to determine the



general concepts you want to discuss in your paper.

Step 2 – Writing

Each paper should have a section for an introduction, methods, results and discussion. There is no “correct” order of writing a manuscript but, generally, it is easiest to write the methods first, results second, introduction third and the discussion last. Writing will almost always take longer than you anticipate so start early if you want to finish by a specific deadline. Typically, there is no deadline set by journals for submission; you can submit any time you wish. Also, it’s important to familiarize yourself with the guidelines of the journal you are aiming to publish in so you can tailor your page setup, figures and references to that particular journal. It is easiest to use a good citation manager (i.e. End Note) to complete your references.

Step 3 - Submitting

Submission instructions vary from journal to journal and specific instructions can be found online.

Step 4 - After submission

Once you have submitted your manuscript, it will take several weeks to hear back (1-2 months on average). Response will arrive via email stating your manuscript was either: (1) rejected (2) rejected with suggestions to resubmit (3) accepted with revisions or (4) accepted without revisions. They will almost always have suggestions to improve your manuscript, so don’t take it personally if you receive your paper back with several pages worth of suggestions. You can resubmit your paper after completing all the revisions, and the process will be repeated until the manuscript gets accepted without any further modifications. Once accepted, it usually takes several weeks before the manuscript achieves publication in the journal; however, the paper is often published online within a couple of days.



I5. Thesis Defense/Final Project

Coursework MSc Final Presentation:

Coursework MSc students must prepare a written report and present the findings of their research to fellow students and faculty members. These presentations take place at the end of their study period, and students are sometimes required to prepare a poster to aid with their presentations.

Thesis MSc Defense:

Upon completing their academic term, thesis MSc students must successfully defend their research thesis. Generally, the student will give a presentation of his/her work, with the aid of a powerpoint presentation, of approximately 20 minutes in duration. After the presentation, the floor is open to general questions from the audience, after which there is a short break. After the break, the members of the examining committee question the presenter on his/her work. Officially, the examining committee consists of one member of the advisory committee (typically the advisor), a faculty member from the department who is not on the advisory committee, a faculty member from the department who may or may not be part of the advisory committee, and an optional fourth member from inside or outside of the department who may or may not be on the advisory committee. At the end of the examination, the student will be asked to leave while the examining committee deliberates as to whether or not the student has successfully defended his/her MSc.



The student will then be called back into the room where he/she will be informed of the examining committee's decision as well as any revisions to the thesis that need to be made.

Thesis PhD Defense:

A PhD defense is very similar to an MSc defense. The key difference is that the examining committee must include an external examiner from a different academic institution. The examining committee consists of two members of the advisory committee, one external (to the university) examiner and one external (to the advisory committee) examiner, as well as a chair. The presentation is also typically slightly longer than an MSc thesis presentation (the average is approximately 25-30 minutes).

16. I'm Done my Graduate Studies...Now What?!

Grad school is, of course, focussed on academic excellence in a specific area of interest. However, grad students also acquire many additional skills throughout their degree...sometimes without even realizing it. From communication and presentation skills to writing skills to collaboration skills, grad students gain practical knowledge and aptitudes which are extremely valuable to apply in the workplace. Throughout your graduate studies, take the opportunity to network with people at conferences and seminars, explore different areas of research, and keep an open mind regarding what your future could entail. If you find yourself wondering what to do after your MSc or PhD, you are certainly not alone! But don't panic!



As previously mentioned, you are a highly educated and skilled individual and plenty of opportunities are available. In addition to jobs in academia, there is also a wide variety of positions available in both industry and government for individuals with an MSc or a PhD.

1. Academia

If you wish to stay in academia, you can continue on to a PhD degree (if applicable), look for a post-doc position or find a faculty position that doesn't require a post-doc fellowship.

Looking for a PhD position

After completing their MSc, students may choose to pursue a PhD with their same MSc advisor or search for a position with a different advisor. When searching for a PhD position, it is important to search the literature that's being published from a lab, talk to the current students in that lab and, of course, approach the faculty member whom you have interest in working with. Choosing to pursue a PhD is a big decision; the importance of finding a "good fit" in terms of advisor, lab and research area cannot be overestimated.

Looking for a Post-doc position

Searching for a post-doc position is similar to searching for a PhD position. Read current publications and talk to other researchers and students to find available positions. Conferences are a great place to see what other faculty members and students are working on and to make contact with them. Also, any collaboration with other researchers you may have had during your PhD can serve as a starting position to organizing a post-doc position. It is important to start searching for a post-doc position at least a year before you complete your PhD.



This way, you allow yourself enough time to make arrangements with your new employer as well as apply for grants (most deadlines are in October or November).

Also, there are funding opportunities available for post-doc positions and, if you're able to attain your own funding, you become very attractive to potential employers. Some websites that advertise available post-doc positions include:

<http://www.findapostdoc.com/firstmain.asp>

<http://dir.nhlbi.nih.gov/oe/postdoc.asp>

Looking for a Job in Academia

It is important to begin searching for jobs well before the completion of your degree, as most institutions have extensive interview processes that can last up to several months. Additionally, not all positions have an immediate start date; many institutions hire months (or sometimes even years) in advance of the actual start date of the position.

Job postings can appear in journals, on university/college websites, at conferences or online. It is best to check out all of these resources to see what is available. Sites worth checking out include:

<http://www.higheredjobs.com/>

2. Industry

It is advisable to commence the job search at least 6 months prior to when you'd like to start working (due to potentially lengthy interview processes). The key to finding a great job is to be persistent and apply for as many positions as you can. Some websites which are worth checking out include:

<http://employer.jobscience.com/index.cfm>

<http://www.thelabrat.com>

<http://www.oci.utoronto.ca/careers/index.htm>



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