The Graduate Student Experience

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What is graduate studies?

- Any form of post-baccalaureate credit study
- The process of transforming undergraduate students into independent researchers and academic colleagues
- Emphasis in graduate studies very strongly on:
  - Independent ideas, analysis
  - Self-directed study and research
  - New ideas; working at the leading edge (not just reporting what others have done)
How do I find the next step on the path?

- What path? There is no path! You get to decide how to spend your time.

- Graduate studies is about finding your own path, making mistakes, advancing knowledge

- Ways you can make the path easier:
  - Make a plan - time lines; tasks; who to be involved
  - Organize your resources (many available: Learning Commons, GSLI, World of Work, support services, etc.)
  - Seek advice early if you have questions or concerns
  - Remember to balance family, leisure, and work
Work? How much work?

- **Coursework + project master’s**: 60-80 pgs; often just review of existing work, usually no primary research

- **Thesis master’s**: 100-125 pgs; new tool or theory, not necessarily fully tested

- **Doctoral**: 175-250 pgs; major contribution to the discipline; new tool or theory fully tested and explained
Who will guide me?

- Your advisor!
- Your advisory committee
- Your graduate coordinator
- Your graduate secretary
- If those options fail, try
  - Department chair
  - Other students, Graduate Students’ Association
  - Assistant Vice President, Graduate Studies
Advisory Committees

- **Graduate Diploma**
  - No committee necessary (although one may be assigned)

- **Master’s**
  - Minimum of two members; often three
  - Coursework master’s: graduate coordinator/other

- **Doctoral**
  - Minimum of three members; often four – five

- **Defense committees** for MA/MSc and PhD/DVSc must be mainly at arm’s length
  - Doctoral exams include an external examiner from another university
Required Forms

- Advisory Committee Appointment Form
- Graduate Degree Program Form

Due at the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) by middle of the second semester
Times to Completion

- **Graduate Diploma**
  - 2 to 4 semesters

- **Master’s**
  - 6 semesters

- **Doctoral**
  - 12 semesters
    (16 with direct entry or transfer from master’s)

- **DVSc**
  - 9 semesters
What if I get into trouble?

- Trust me: it’s hard to surprise us!
- Start with your advisor (if you feel comfortable doing so), then grad coordinator
  - Aim to resolve the issue at the department level if possible – try the chair if necessary
- Some issues need other resources: health, finances, counselling
- When in doubt, send me an email - ask for advice (but Pauline handles the money!)
What if I get into trouble?

**ISSUE OR PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED**

- Interpersonal conflict between student and advisor
  - Graduate Coordinator
  - Chair
  - Dean of Graduate Studies (informal mediation). Dean may seek advice of the College Dean.

- Dispute over progress evaluation or failed qualifying exam or final oral examination; may include procedural irregularity, questions of academic merit or extenuating circumstances, including medical or compassionate.
  - Graduate Coordinator
  - Board of Graduate Studies (Admissions and Progress Committee) (next step will depend on issue)
  - Senate Committee on Student Petitions
  - Departmental action; letter to Chair reporting on policies not followed.

- Disruptive, abusive, or destructive behaviour on the part of the advisor.
  - Complaint by student to Chair/Director (informal mediation). If not resolved, or disciplinary action may be required, College Dean.

- Disruptive, abusive, or destructive behaviour on the part of the student.
  - Complaint at the departmental level (usually to Graduate Coordinator and/or Chair)
  - Complaint (by advisor, chair, graduate coordinator) normally to Security Services, who take carriage of complaint through the University’s Judicial Process.

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION GUIDE**

NOTE: This flowchart represents current policies and procedures at the University of Guelph. University community members who believe they have a human rights complaint may, at any time, consult the University's Human Rights Policy and the Human Rights and Equity Office.
What if I need assistance?

OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
University Centre, 3rd Floor