

# Institute of Women's and Gender Studies

## MA Handbook

### Carleton University

February 2021 version

(All effort has been made to ensure the information provided is accurate including links).

#### Table of Contents

<b>PART I: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES AND WEBSITES OF INTEREST</b>	<b>2</b>
Important Websites	2
Awards/Scholarships/Funding	3
Workshops about Professional, Writing, and Teaching Training	4
Student Office Space/Mail/Keys	5
<b>PART II: MA/MRE/Course work in WGST</b>	<b>5</b>
Breakdown of Streams: Course Work, Major Research Paper (MRE), Thesis	5
What to expect during the defence (Thesis option/stream only)	8
Finishing Up & Final Deadlines	10
How to write a MRE/thesis proposal: A guide	11
Components of a Proposal	12
Finding a Potential Supervisor	14

#### About this MA Handbook

This handbook is meant to be a guide and resource. Please be advised that you should always consult the official Graduate Calendar for important dates and deadlines. Go to <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/dates/>, to find a quick reference to these important dates as set by the university.

In addition to this handbook, other sources of key information are available from the Graduate Advisor. The Graduate Advisor is a faculty member located in the Institute who serves a three-year term in this administrative position. They are responsible for information and decisions related to academic issues pertaining to your studies. Another key source of information is the WGST Institute Administrator (Lana Keon). The WGST Institute Administrator is responsible for technical information regarding registration, application submission, et cetera. Finally, the Director and faculty in WGST are always ready to help you with your questions and are important sources of information as you navigate your studies.

This handbook is divided in two parts. Part I focuses on information related to institutional support (departmental, faculty, and campus wide) including pertinent websites and information about funding resources. Part II focuses on the academic program, roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students, and important dates and deadlines related to the program.

## PART I: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES AND WEBSITES OF INTEREST

### Important Websites

There are several websites related to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, Library, and CUPE 4600 that you should visit:

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs

<https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/>

Graduate Calendar

<http://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/>

Library and grad students

<https://library.carleton.ca/services/services-graduate-students>

The library resource person for Women's and Gender Studies is Martha Attridge Bufton. The Carleton Library has many resources available to students. These include: unlimited interlibrary loans through the "Racer" program, immediate article access and downloading via a number of databases, off-campus access to the library catalogue including online journals, access and borrowing privileges at the University of Ottawa, laptop loans and wireless connection anywhere in the library and pay printers and photocopiers. Students also have access to the University of Ottawa library system. Please visit their website for more information. Finally, students should also familiarize themselves with the resources available via Library and Archives Canada.

CUPE 4600

<http://www.cupe4600.ca/>

Carleton University is a unionized workplace. CUPE 4600 represents teaching assistants (TAs), research assistants (RAs) (who are internally funded) and contract instructors (CIs- all roles critical for the functioning of the university). It is *your responsibility* to read your collective agreement and to familiarize yourself with key articles regarding workload, salaries, and grievances. Do not expect the professor connected to your teaching assignment (or research assistantship if funded through Carleton) to know the details of your collective agreement. In terms of your TAs, all teaching assistants will be asked to accept the statement of duties document prepared with the professor outlining the tasks and time commitment for the assigned course. *This is NOT a contract*. The ONLY legally binding contract you have as a teaching assistant is your collective agreement. We recommend highly that you track your hours to ensure that you are able to complete the tasks assigned to you in the time agreed upon when you accepted the Statement of Duties (online – it will come to your email). If you are unable to mark assignments or prepare for class in the time allotted and this is reflected through your own record of working hours, please communicate this *as soon as possible* with the faculty member

for whom you are working. 'Overwork' situations are serious and grievable. Faculty members appreciate open and honest communication well in advance of a potential issue such as overwork arising. While the outcome of such interactions will depend on the specific situation, faculty member, etc. and cannot be predicted, this is a good practice. Track hours and communicate any issues openly and as soon as they arise.

Union Steward

<https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/teaching-assistants/>

CUPE 4600 union stewards are responsible for attending the Stewards' Council of CUPE 4600 on behalf of WGST. Consider running for this position if it is vacant.

The Graduate Student Association (GSA)

<http://gsacarleton.ca/>

The Graduate Student Association is your main source of representation, advocacy and support services on campus. The GSA represents the collective interests and the general welfare of the graduate students at Carleton University. Its primary goals are to establish and maintain a barrier free academic and social environment in which all students can thrive. It acts as a line of communication between the graduate student community and the administration. It also strives to support the professional development of its members in addition to their emotional and financial wellbeing. Finally, they are a centre of political, intellectual and social contact for graduate students.

International Student Services Office

<https://carleton.ca/isso/> and <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/2020/information-for-new-international-grad-students/>

The International Student Services Office (ISSO) offers services and programs that contribute to international experiences for all Carleton University students. Please visit this site for information about working on campus, information about immigration services, social events/organizations, etc.

Paul Menton Centre

<https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

Paul Menton Centre provides a multitude of services for disabled students including advocacy and accommodations.

### **Awards/Scholarships/Funding**

There are several avenues to access funding. The following are some suggestions.

GSA awards/bursaries and other sources of funding

<https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/2015/where-to-find-funding/>

<https://gsacarleton.ca/emergency-grant/>

Your Graduate Student Association supports you in a variety of ways including helping you to find funding. The GSA also offers travel grants for those students interested in presenting at conferences and family leave grants for students with family responsibilities. Here are some links you should visit

CUPE 4600 and funding advances/loans

<http://4600old.cupe.ca/Benefits-and-Funds/TA-Advance>

Your union is also a source of financial support. There are two main sources of financial support but please visit their website for other possibilities. TA Advance (open to all graduate TAs with a regular position at 130 hours per term of up to \$750.00 in advance). For more information go to the link provided above.

Emergency Loan (applicants may be awarded an emergency loan of up to \$700). For more information go to: <http://4600old.cupe.ca/Benefits-and-Funds/TA-Emergency-Loan>

Internal Donor awards

<https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/awards-and-funding/internal-awards/>

This awards or scholarships are based on donorships. You must apply via Carleton Central. We encourage you to research these awards and scholarships since the application process is not onerous.

External Scholarships

There are two main categories of scholarships available to graduate students at the provincial (Ontario Graduate Scholarship-OGS) and federal level (Social Sciences and Humanities Scholarship-SSHRC) but these are certainly not the only external funding at your disposal. Please note that OGS domestic and international students are eligible to apply but only domestic students can apply for SSHRC.

Information about SSHRC's scholarship programs can be found at:

<https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/sshrc/>

Information about Ontario Graduate Scholarships can be found at:

<https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/ogs/>

As mentioned, there are variety of other external awards and scholarships available. In addition to the information provided above please also consider the Terms & Conditions booklet at <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/newgrad-students/terms/>

### **Workshops about Professional, Writing, and Teaching Training**

The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs offers graduate students professional development opportunities geared to both academic skill building and employability outside of the academy.

Teaching Workshops

<https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/professionaldevelopment/teaching/>

Writing Workshops

<https://carleton.ca/gradpd/writing-support/>

<https://carleton.ca/gradpd/professional-writing-modules/>

Enrichment Mini-Course Program (EMCP)

<http://carleton.ca/emcp/>

Each year, Carleton University offers a week-long series of mini-courses for students in grades 8-11 (Ontario) and Sec. 2-5 (Québec).

For professional development to assist your graduate work within the academy and to ready you for life after grad school, please visit:

MyGradSkills.ca

<https://www.mygradskills.ca/>

Carleton University graduate students can also complete online workshops on the website/link provided. These workshops include a number of self-paced, online modules on a range of topics, including teaching & learning, to career development, to community engagement, and entrepreneurship.

### **Student Office Space/Mail/Keys**

Graduate students in the Institute will have access to a desk/cubicle located in shared room on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor of Dunton Tower. This shared space also serves as a lounging area. Students also have access to the seminar room (located across from the shared room) when it is not occupied or reserved for events (i.e., class in session, defences, talks, etc). Each graduate student will be assigned a mailbox (also located in this shared space). Finally, keys to the shared space will be assigned to you by the Institute's Administrator.

## **PART II: MA/MRE/Course work in WGST**

### **Breakdown of Streams: Course Work, Major Research Paper (MRE), Thesis**

There are three options available to students to complete the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in Women's and Gender Studies. *Please be advised that if you have chosen to specialize in African Studies or Latin and Caribbean Studies you must complete the requirements attached to these specializations as specified in the university calendar.*

**Option 1: The Course Work Stream:** The course work option allows students to complete a graduate degree without doing a major research essay (MRE) or a thesis. Students who choose this option must complete **5.0 credits at the 5000 level** (but can also take some credits at the 4000 level). This usually translates into about 3 classes of 0.5 credits each a semester (not including the spring/summer terms).

Students usually choose the course work stream from the start of the program however, it is possible to make a final decision by the end of the first year of study. Students who choose a MRE or thesis stream but decide to switch into a course work stream should consult with the Graduate Advisor and/or the Institute Administrator.

**Option 2: Major Research Essay (MRE):** A research essay assesses and evaluates existing research meaning that it is *primarily* a critical and scholarly reflection on the scholarly, artistic, and/or activist work of other on a clearly specified topic (e.g., queer archives, trans healthcare, decolonizing reproductive justice). The research essay can have a wider scope than a thesis because it can be more speculative and agenda-setting. Its role is to provide illustrative evidence, rather than definitive, well-documented answers. The end result of a research essay could be a well-grounded set of new research questions or the initial explanation and preliminary development of a working argument (formal decision for this option/stream is made by second week of April as part of your proposal submission).

Reflecting the scholarly, artistic and activist work that frames Women and Gender Studies as a field of critical inquiry, we encourage our graduate students to pursue and engage with different forms of knowledge production. If you wish to submit an MRE that is **research creation oriented** (i.e., research combining creative and academic research practices through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation), please do discuss this option with your supervisor. Keep in mind that faculty who are trained in humanities may have more experience or expertise to guide you through this process should you choose to embark on a research creation oriented project. This does not mean that social scientists cannot or should not be considered viable options as potential supervisors; it does mean that you may want to consider a committee with members that address a variety of disciplines (humanities and social sciences).

The MOST IMPORTANT thing to remember is that an MRE is not supposed to be original work. You are not being asked, at this level, to conduct research that will dismantle a field or usurp its relevance (☺). You are expected to write about your research from a provocative and generative approach that will help give insight into a concept, social practice, community, etc.

Students wishing to do a Major Research Essay (MRE) must apply to the Institute's Graduate Committee for approval. To apply, you must complete the following forms: Candidate Thesis or Research Essay Application and M.A./MRE Thesis Advisory Committee Form. Students can access these forms by going to this link on our webpage: [https://carleton.ca/womensstudies/forms\\_scholarships/](https://carleton.ca/womensstudies/forms_scholarships/)

Attach these forms to your proposal and writing sample. All material should be submitted electronically, attention to the Institute Administrator and the Graduate Advisor. Please put "Thesis or Research Essay Application" in the subject line.

If you are applying for the Research Essay stream you must submit the following:

- A short proposal (approximately 1-2 typewritten double-spaced pages) indicating a tentative title, the area of study and the contribution of the essay to this area. The proposal should reflect a critical engagement with the literature;
- A work plan for the thesis which **must** include a timeline for completion (approximately 1 page in length);
- A short bibliography (approximately 1 typewritten single-spaced page);

- A sample of your written work: specifically, an essay completed in the previous term of work. Please submit an ungraded version of the essay.

**NOTE:** If you are planning on doing the fieldwork for your thesis in the summer term, you **MUST** submit your application on the last Friday in February. This will allow the Institute to review the application and make a decision in time for you to submit an Ethics application and have it approved. If you miss this deadline, you may not be able to begin your fieldwork in the summer term.

Please note: Students pursuing the MRE option must have earned an **A- or higher** for all grades in the MA program. If you have any questions about these requirements, please speak to the Graduate Advisor.

**Option 3: Thesis:** The overall scope of a thesis is a purposeful and narrow focus on a specific topic or argument supported by theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and evidence-standards recognized by our interdisciplinary fields (i.e., women's and gender studies, sexuality studies, critical disability studies, and critical race studies). Students typically choose the thesis option during the *Winter term* of their first year in the program (formal decision for this option/stream is made by second week of April as part of your proposal submission). At this time, students tend to have a clearer sense of a doable research project after completing the pro-seminar and their first semester of course work. By the end of your first year, you will have had the opportunity to make a connection with a potential supervisor, completed the required WGST course work, and will feel inspired to take up a more substantive piece of writing in an area that interests you most.

Critical programs eschew one form of scholarship and draw on multiple practices of knowledge creation and circulation; therefore, we support new initiatives and interventions from our graduate students into existing discussions. If you wish to submit a thesis that is **research creation oriented** (that is, research that combines creative and academic research practices through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation), please do not hesitate to discuss this option with your supervisor(s).

The MOST IMPORTANT thing to remember is that a thesis is not supposed to be original work. You are not being asked, at this level, to conduct research that will dismantle a field or usurp its relevance (☺). You are expected to write about your research from a provocative and generative approach that will help give insight into a concept, social practice, community, etc.

Students should consult this link for templates regarding the thesis title page, copyright language, formatting instructions, etc: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/thesis-requirements/thesis-forms-templates-policies/> for

Students wishing to write a thesis must apply to the Institute's Graduate Committee for approval. To apply, you must complete the following forms: Candidate Thesis or Research Essay

Application and M.A./MRE Thesis Advisory Committee Form. Students can access these forms by going to this link on our webpage: [https://carleton.ca/womensstudies/forms\\_scholarships/](https://carleton.ca/womensstudies/forms_scholarships/)

Attach these forms to your proposal and writing sample. All material should be submitted electronically, attention to the Institute Administrator and the Graduate Advisor. Please put “Thesis or Research Essay Application” in the subject line.

If you are applying for the Thesis stream you must submit the following:

- A short proposal (3 – 4 typewritten double-spaced pages) summarising your proposed project. This must include a tentative title, a clear topic statement and research question(s), your theoretical framework, and a discussion of the methods you plan to use;
- A work plan for the thesis which **must** include a timeline for completion (approximately 1 page in length);
- A short bibliography (approximately 1 single-spaced page);
- A sample of your written work: specifically, an essay completed in the previous term of work. Please submit an ungraded version of the essay.

Please note: Only students whose grades in the MA program are at the A- level and higher will be considered for the Thesis option. If you have any questions about these requirements, please speak to the graduate advisor.

#### **What to expect during the defence (Thesis option/stream only)**

The structure of the defence (when it takes place, who is in the room, what are the procedures) is regulated by the Carleton Senate, an academic policy-making body bound by the university’s constitution. Consequently, the procedures that dictate the thesis defence are highly-standardized and governed or designed to ensure fairness for the degree candidate (you). Students should consult the following link for information about the **thesis requirements** as stipulated by FGPA: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/thesis-requirements/>

In a nutshell, here is what to expect during a thesis defence (based on FGPA’s **Thesis Examination Policy** <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Thesis-Examination-Policy.pdf>):

- The members of the defence committee ALWAYS include: 1) the external (an academic who is an expert in your research field but has never read your work until this point); 2) the internal (a WGST faculty member or cross-listed member of the Institute whom you may know and has seen your previous work but has not commented or edited your examinable thesis); and 3) your supervisor(s). The Chair of the Defence (usually the Graduate Advisor) is present as the arbiter of the proceedings. In other words, their role is considered the most ‘neutral’ in the room. The Chair of the Defence is the person you turn to during the proceedings if you feel uncomfortable, feel ill, or need to stop. They will follow your instructions.



- Once everyone gathers, the Chair of the Defence will ask you to leave the room and wait near by.
- The Chair of the Defence asks the defence committee, starting with the external, if the defence should proceed even if this decision has ALREADY been confirmed a week before the defence. Once everyone confirms, the Chair of the Defence will ask you to return to the room.
- You are asked (if you choose) to give a short presentation.
- The first round of the defence begins. During this round, no one is allowed to interrupt each other as the committee members take turns to ask questions or make comments. The external is given 20 minutes to ask you questions followed by the internal (15 minutes). Your supervisor(s) is also given 15 minutes (each if you have a co-supervision) to ask questions or make comments but can elect to forego their allotted time. The Chair of the Defence is the time-keeper. Remember: The volume of questions you answer is based on how long you take to answer a question. The allotted time is based on the duration of the exchange. The first round usually lasts about 1 hour and 10 minutes.
- The Chair of the Defence usually asks if everyone wants a short break (5 min) after the first round. You may leave the room during this time.
- After the break, the second round begins. The Chair of the Defence invites the external to ask additional questions but the time allotment is more fluid. At this point, other defence committee members may join the conversation in a productive manner. What usually happens is that the second round becomes an open discussion but the Chair of the Defence ensures that both the external and the internal are able to ask any questions they may not have had a chance to ask during the first round. The second round usually lasts about 30 minutes.
- At the closing of the second round, the Chair of the Defence asks you if you have any concluding remarks to add. The members of the defence committee are not allowed to interrupt your comments—you have the last word but you are not obligated to give concluding remarks if you choose not to. Once this process is over, you will be asked to leave the room by the Chair of the Defence (but don't go far!).
- At this point, the members of the defence committee deliberate on your written work and oral defence. As per the thesis examination policy, the Chair of the Defence must ensure the 'paper work' (a form) is completed in the presence of the defence committee who are required to sign the document. Once the final decisions are made on both the written and oral defence, the Chair of the Defence will invite you to return to the room. The Chair of the Defence will 'announce' the result to you verbally (Congratulations!) and give you the brief details of the outcome.
- The defence is over.

Remember that your supervisor(s) has been through this process! Your supervisor(s) is the best person to help you deal with any questions you may have. You are also welcome to discuss this process with the Graduate Advisor and/or the WGST Administrator. Finally and remember: everyone involved in this process is interested and investing in your success.

### Breakdown for thesis and major research paper

	MA Thesis	Research Essay
Credits	2.0	1.0
Proposal	4-5 pages	2-3 pages
Supervisor(s)	Yes	Yes
Committee	Not required	Not required
Defence	Yes (internal and external examiners to be chosen by supervisor in discussion with student)	No defence; a Second Reader and the Supervisor will mark the final submission
Length of manuscript	90 pages minimum (excluding works cited)	60 pages minimum (excluding works cited)
Final deposit	Electronic copy via FGPA	Electronic copy to Administrator (remains on file)
Grade	After formal defence, satisfactory (SAT) or unsatisfactory (UNS)	Letter grade (submitted to the Grad Advisor)
Submission dates*	End of Winter term of 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	End of Winter term of 2 <sup>nd</sup> year

\*Please note that this is a recommendation. Students can defend their thesis or submit their MRE at the end of the Summer term in their second year. We advise that you complete your work before Fall term fees apply in September. Students are also able to apply for extensions and should consult with their supervisor(s) should this be necessary. An extension request is submitted to FGPA with the support of your supervisor(s).

### Finishing Up & Final Deadlines: Submitting for defence (thesis) or to receive a final mark (MRE)

Option/Stream	Submitting defendable/final draft copy	Submitting defended/final draft copy
MA Thesis	3 weeks before agreed upon defence date	Ideally, 4 days before the due date to upload your defended copy via Carleton Central set by FGPA
MRE	2 weeks before agreed upon date for Second Reader to send mark to Supervisor	Submit clean/corrected copy of MRE to Grad Administrator for the Institute's records

Please note that the above deadlines are a guide or a set of recommendations that are partially dictated by university mandated dates and internal suggestions to satisfy those requirements. If you require an extension or need more time to finish your work, be sure to discuss your needs with your supervisor(s) and/or the Graduate Advisor. The table above is meant to ensure that

you finish 'on-time' and that you do not incur financial penalties (i.e., pay more or unnecessary fees).

**Research Ethics Review:** If your research requires conducting interviews, surveys, participatory observation or any research involving human beings, you must submit an ethics review application with the Office of Research Ethics (<https://carleton.ca/researchethics/>). Please note that this process is governed by the Tri-Council Regulations ([https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique\\_tcps2-eptc2\\_2018.html](https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2018.html)). Be sure to consult with your supervisor(s) regarding this process. Requesting ethics approval is a time-consuming affair. Be sure to consider this component of your research as you prepare your timeline to completion.

### How to write a MRE/thesis proposal: A guide

A thesis proposal is a document that offers a road map about the research you *intend* to conduct as part of fulfilling your degree requirements. All students writing a thesis or MRE must submit a proposal. This proposal is approved by a committee comprised of two WGST faculty members (usually the Graduate Advisor and one other faculty member) that do *not* sit on your committee (i.e., your supervisor or co-supervisors are not eligible to comment on the proposal). The proposal review committee will assess your proposal focusing on (1) whether you have presented a well-developed research project that is viable and relevant to *contemporary* scholarly topics in Women's and Gender Studies, (2) the appropriateness of your methodology (i.e., both the theoretical framework(s) informing your analysis and your specific research method (s), and (3) the viability of your timelines. Your timeline is a breakdown of the weeks/months it will take you to move through the phases of your project from start to finish. You will provide an overview of time spent engaging in research and information gathering - analysis-writing draft (MRE)/drafts of chapters (Thesis)-incorporating feedback/editing-defence (thesis only)-revisions.

The role of your supervisor(s) is to assist you to formulate and articulate your preliminary ideas. They should help you with editing and commenting on drafts of your proposal. This is a critical step because the proposal is the written format of what has been, perhaps, weeks of abstract discussion about your topic. While all the components of the proposals are important, the sections addressing the theoretical approach you will draw on to frame your thesis/research paper topic and the methodology are the most significant. Be sure to dedicate time in your discussion with your supervisor(s) about these components. This will help you to write a solid proposal that you can use as a foundation/concrete 'roadmap' (or GPS) that will help you maintain your focus as you work on your MRE or thesis.

Remember, a *proposal* signifies that you are in a preliminary stage of research. This initial phase means that you have a clear research objective and research questions, however, you *do not* have the answers to these questions nor are you expected to draw and conclusions concerning your topic. In many cases, what you write in your proposal will change dramatically as you delve deeper into your research, analysis, and writing. This is entirely acceptable and expected.

## Components of a Proposal

### Title and title page

Please give your work a tentative title. It can change and, in all probability, will change, but titles are extremely important. They convey the core thoughts, theory, research area, and sometimes, date range, related to your research topic. The title does not have to be creative or imaginative but it does have to be short and succinct (you can have a sub-title if you like). It has to communicate a 'message' to your reader that helps them understand the main idea(s) of what they will read.

### Introduction/Theory section (approx. 2 pages if MA thesis; 1 page for MRE)

- a) describe your topic, context and focus of your research
- b) explain the background of your research/study to help you set the stage for your research/thoughts/ideas
- c) research questions that will guide you and narrow your study
- d) discuss the theoretical approach(es) you will use and *why*

### Literature review (approx. 1 page if MA thesis; ½ to 1 page for MRE)

Scholars often position their own research, argumentation and findings through a literature review. While never comprehensive (you cannot include everything), the 'lit review' offers an overview of existing work that you deem most relevant to your topic. Literature reviews mainly include the work of any major thinkers/scholarship/material/reports/documentation related to your topic and sub-topic. Similar to reading reflection assignments or critical analysis of books that you have completed in your undergraduate studies, the literature review is a space where you discuss the ways in which scholars, artists, activists (whomever is relevant) have approached the subject/topic. You do so by: (a) offering brief but focused descriptions of these sources – what were the author(s)'s major research questions? What (if any) key concepts did they introduce to the discussion that influences your work on the topic? What argument did they present? What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of this argument as it relates to your proposed research? Perhaps you agree enthusiastically with specific thinkers in your research area and seek to evaluate if their argument holds true when applied to the specific demographic, community, region that you are studying. Or, perhaps, you take issue with a particular argument or key concept because it fails to address particular considerations that you believe to be crucial to developing a fuller understanding of the topic. You should also provide details of your proposed research addressing where you think your study fits in. Does it fill a gap in the literature? Are you positioned to add a crucial dimension to an existing consideration (e.g. 'queering' topic)?

Please note that the following discussion is meant to be a guide and tends to reflect work in social sciences more than the humanities. While all students are required to engage in thorough background research, you and your supervisor may decide to present evidence of your knowledge of scholarship related specifically to your topic in a different manner.

### Methodology (approx.1 page if MA thesis; ½ page for MRE)

In its simplest form, methodology refers to the theoretical approach you take to studying your topic *and* how (the data collection, material, sources, archives, et cetera) you will achieve or implement this approach. In this section, indicate if you will use a discourse analysis methodology, oral interviews, surveys, participatory observation, etc. Once you have decided upon methodology you need to address *why* you chose this methodology? You do so by answering the following questions:

- a) how will this methodology help you answer your major research questions? In other words, what are the strengths of this methodology in terms of your study?
- b) what are the limitations of the methodology and how will you deal with these issues?
- c) how does this methodology dovetail with the theoretical approach?

### **Thesis Chapter/MRE sections outline and timeline to completion** (approx. ½ page for thesis or MRE)

This is a rough outline that gives the proposal examining committee a sense as to whether you have discussed a feasible timeline to completion with your co/supervisor. Do indicate how many chapters you will have based on your explanation in the sections you write above, when you think you will have at least two drafts of each chapter completed, and when you intend to submit the final draft for assessment/evaluation. This section should offer a tentative date for a defence as well.

- Tentative chapter titles/sections in the chapters
- Indicate deadlines you have set. It is best practice to be very realistic here and take into consideration other areas of your professional and personal life that impact your studies. While no one can plan for life's unforeseen circumstances, as TAs you will be very busy marking midterms and final assignments; you may have an RAship that requires more of your time at certain points. It's best to think ahead and make these allowances in your timeline. For example, some faculty advise their graduate students to omit December as a month they will be writing given that as TAs they will be grading. This is also the holiday season (for both you and your supervisor).
- Indicate the research and writing stages/timeline for each.

### **Bibliography/Works Cited**

Your bibliography should include any works cited and a few other selections. This does not have to be an exhaustive list and should not exceed 1 page in length.

### **Finding a Potential Supervisor**

All faculty members who have permission from the Faculty of Graduate and Postgraduate Affairs to supervisor welcome the opportunity to do so. Indeed, it is part of their overall teaching and research duties to train graduate students however, faculty do choose with whom they wish to work. Like most things in the academy, do not take faculty members' refusal to supervise your project as a personal rejection. Faculty may say no to taking you on as a student because they are already supervising too many students and feel they cannot give you the proper attention

you deserve; they may be taking a sabbatical or planning a leave in the year you are writing; they may have their own research commitments to fulfill during the year you are writing and cannot do justice to your project; or, it may be that your research area and/or methodology is beyond their field of expertise and they believe you would be better educated working under the supervision of another colleague. Whatever the case may be, you should not feel discouraged and should continue your search.

There are different ways to approach a potential supervisor. You should try to approach WGST faculty first. The Institute is fortunate to have several talented and well-known faculty who are cross-listed. They are often willing and able to work with you (see our website for information about which faculty are cross-listed). You can also search for faculty who are not cross-listed. A good first step is to read through departmental websites to find out more about potential supervisors and their research expertise/interests. If you are having trouble locating someone, do not hesitate to ask the Graduate Advisor or other WGST faculty for faculty they think could be a 'good research fit.'

Once you have made a list of about 2-3 potential supervisors you think are a good potential fit, your next step is to email them (one at a time, starting with your top choice first). The anatomy of such an email may look like the following:

- Introduce yourself: your current area of research (title of your MA/MRE); year you are in; what stage you are in (research, writing, finished first draft, etc);
- Indicate that you are contacting them because they have influenced your work; show them that you have done your homework and you know who they are and what they work on
- Explain your work briefly/what your research interest are/information you think is pertinent but professional and academic in nature (should not exceed 3 sentences)
- ask them if they need more info; ask them for an appointment to discuss further

Here are some things you should remember after you send the email:

If you send an email and have not received an answer in two weeks, follow up with a reminder about your original email. If you still do not receive an answer about a week after, then move on to another choice on your list. If they email you or ask to meet with you this DOES NOT mean they want to be your supervisor. It means you have piqued their interest and they want to learn more about you.

#### **Preparing to meet with potential supervisor:**

- First impressions count. Be professional and show them you are serious about your work. One of the best ways to convey your commitment to your graduate research is communicate your ideas in more detail verbally and in an accessible manner (no matter what stage you are in). If you do not know a lot about what you want to do, make sure you show them you are open to learning, being trained, that you are disciplined and focused either way. Perhaps you can express to them what you are reading currently as it

pertains to the topic you want to explore; or, discuss your favorite class and how it shaped your research topic.

- You may want to discuss the ways that your research interests speak to their past or current research. Faculty members are very passionate about their research and often welcome the chance to discuss this field with graduate students. You may want to discuss the ways that your research interests speak to their past or current research. The idea is to demonstrate that you have common interests and ideas.
- You should feel like you are establishing a possible intellectual relationship based on mutual respect and exchange. This is incredibly important because you will be working closely with a supervisor for a very intense year while you write your MRE or thesis. You deserve to work with a supervisor that will assist you to meet, and exceed, your professional goals during your MA. Faculty members often view these initial meetings as initial exploratory conversations to determine 'fit' and will not take it personally if you decide it is best to work with someone else. While speaking with a faculty member can be daunting, remember that we were once graduate students too and can relate to your stage of education. We want you to achieve the most while a student in the Institute so do not be afraid to ask pointed questions to determine the likelihood whether or not they are a good fit for you.
- You may want to ask about supervisory style. Do they encourage students to problem solve and work independently or do they encourage more regular submission of work, meetings, etc. One style is not better than the other but if you require a lot of attention, you most likely will not fit with a supervisor whose approach requires you to work independently. Additionally, you may want to ask whether the supervisor will read and offer extensive feedback on each section of the MRE/chapter of the thesis and what their average turnaround times are like (i.e., will they take two weeks or a month).
- You may want to have an honest and upfront conversation about expectations concerning timelines and the submission of work, as well as their expectations concerning the caliber of your work. This is a good time to be honest about your strengths and weaknesses as a student (for example, maybe you are an excellent writer but struggle with theory or methods). Often this is a time to receive reassurance concerning how they will mentor you through the tough spots.

Both you and the faculty member may need some time to reflect on the meeting and whether or not this has the potential to be a dynamic working relationship that produces an MRE or thesis in which you can take pride. Thank the faculty member for their time and ask them when you can expect to hear back from them OR express to them politely that you need a bit of time and will get back to them in a particular time frame. You should also note that other students are most likely approaching them too so don't take too long.

Good luck on your research and academic endeavours. Remember: All faculty members in the Institute are happy to answer your questions, share thoughts, give you guidance, and offer a helping hand.