



**GRADUATE STUDENT
HANDBOOK**

MA and PhD in Legal Studies

Department of Law and Legal Studies

Carleton University



Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION: THIS IS YOUR HANDBOOK.....	5
Advice & Support.....	5
Registration and Graduate Student Status.....	6
Full-time and Part-time Registration Status	6
Time to Completion (MA)	7
Time to Completion (PhD)	7
Extension of Time Limit.....	8
Continuous Registration in Thesis, Research Essay, or Independent Research Project	8
Deposit of Thesis Copies	9
Loss of Status and Reinstatement	9
Exemption from Registration	9
Coursework.....	9
What the Numbers Mean: 5000, 6000	10
Mandatory Courses (MA).....	10
Mandatory Courses (PhD).....	10
Tutorial/Directed Reading Courses (LAWS 5900, 5901, 6010)	10
Taking Courses in Other Programs.....	11
Grades	12
Graduation.....	13
Funding.....	13
Internal Funding.....	13
Teaching Assistantships	13
Priority Extension Application.....	15
External Funding.....	15
Ontario Graduate Scholarship.....	16
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Scholarships	16
Applying for External Scholarships	16
MA PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.....	17
Overview	17
Choosing Between a Research Essay, Coursework only, and Thesis	17
Moving from One Stream to Another	18
Finding and Working with your MA (MRE/Thesis) Supervisor	18
Strategies for Finding a Research Supervisor.....	19
Working with your Thesis/MRE Supervisor	20

Establishing a Working Relationship with your Thesis/MRE Supervisor	21
Thinking about DRAFTS.....	22
Time Flies: Plans and Deadlines	22
The Master’s Thesis and Preparation for Defence	23
Preparing for the MA Thesis Defence	24
Thesis Defence	24
Recommended Timeline for MA Thesis or MA Research Essay	25
PHD PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS	26
Overview	26
Doctoral Candidacy	26
Time Frames	26
Year One – Course Work	27
Year Two – Comprehensive Exam and Thesis Proposal.....	27
Years Three and Four – The Thesis	27
PhD Comprehensive Examinations Guidelines	28
General Description	28
Timing	28
Comprehensive Exam formats	29
Stage One: Comprehensive Exam Proposal	29
Stage Two: Reading for and Writing the Comprehensive Exam.....	30
Stage Three: Revisions and Comprehensive Exam Defence	30
PhD Thesis Proposal Guidelines	31
Overview	31
Proposal Guidelines	32
Evaluation	33
Language Information	33
Thesis requirements	34
Overview	34
PhD Thesis Defence	35
Developing a Thesis Project, Finding a Research Supervisor	35
Who can Supervise Doctoral Students?.....	35
Finding a Research Supervisor.....	36
The PhD Supervisor-Student Working Relationship	37
ODDS AND ENDS.....	39
Working as a Contract Instructor.....	39
Graduate Student Study Area.....	39
E-mail and Written Correspondence	39

Payroll.....	39
Legal Database Access.....	39
Computing Services.....	40
Chet Mitchell Law Resource Centre.....	40
Jurisprudence Centre.....	40
Student Organizations and Activities.....	40
Student support services.....	41
KEEPING IN TOUCH.....	42

INTRODUCTION: THIS IS YOUR HANDBOOK

The Legal Studies graduate programs are home to students and faculty from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds who pursue cutting-edge research informed by an array of different theories, approaches, and methodologies. We are proud of this diversity. Welcome to the Department of Law and Legal Studies!

Whether you are a new MA student or a PhD student looking for guidance about the comprehensive exams, this handbook is for you. It contains the most important regulations plus a dash of advice for navigating the process of graduate studies. No handbook can contain everything and be everything. This present handbook covers most of the regulations, but in case of doubt, please refer to the Graduate Calendar (<http://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/>), the ultimately authoritative guide to the rules and regulations of graduate studies.

Advice & Support

As a graduate student, you will build strong connections to peers, faculty members, and administrative staff. But there are two people in particular who are there to give advice and support (and the occasional reminder): the Graduate Administrator and the Graduate Program Supervisor.

The **Graduate Program Administrator:** is your main contact person for administrative issues (registration, funding, Thesis submission). They send you a lot of important emails that you cannot afford to ignore. You can contact them by email at: lawgrad@carleton.ca.

The **Graduate Program Supervisor:** is a Professor in the Department of Law & Legal Studies and is your main contact person in academic matters such as course selection, finding a supervisor, applying for scholarships, and dealing with your thesis committee. Please contact them if you would like to make an appointment. Email: michael.chistensen@carleton.ca.

Registration and Graduate Student Status

Full-time and Part-time Registration Status

This section contains some of the rules about graduate student registration that are contained in the Graduate Calendar. According to the Graduate Calendar you can be enrolled in a graduate program as a part-time student or as a full-time student:

“Full- or part-time status is established at the time of admission to a program. Graduate students admitted and registered as full-time students will be required to continue in and complete their program as full-time students, and will be assessed full-time fees for the duration of their program. Graduate students admitted and registered as part-time students will be required to continue and complete their program as part-time students, and will be assessed part-time fees for the duration of their program.”

A part-time graduate student will not register in more than 1.25 credits per term, including audit courses.

A full-time graduate student will normally register in 1.5 or 2.0 credits per term, however, full-time status is not determined by course load.

Students who are unsure of their status should contact the office of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs for assistance at 613-520-2525.

Important: Once you begin your studies as a full-time student, you would remain full-time until the successful completion of the program requirements or until a request to change status has been submitted and approved. In order to begin the process to change status, either part-time to full-time or full-time to part-time one would be required to fill out and submit the Academic/Registrarial Change form. This is available on the FGPA website: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/forms-policies/>.

Supporting documentation is normally required. Status change requests must be approved by the Dept. of Law and Legal Studies and FGPA before any changes are made official.

Time to Completion (MA)

Full-time

All master's students admitted as full-time students must normally complete their degree requirements within two calendar years after the date of initial registration, unless their program states otherwise and regardless of any subsequent change of status to part-time. Terms of non-registration are equated to full-time registration terms when calculating the overall time to program completion.

Part-time

All master's students admitted as part-time students must normally complete their degree requirements within six calendar years after the date of initial registration, unless their program states otherwise. Terms of non-registration are equated to part-time registration terms when calculating the overall time to program completion. A change of a student's status from part-time to full-time status will result in a pro-rated reduction in the required time to completion for each subsequent term of full-time study.

Failure to complete the program within the prescribed timelines or failure to maintain continuous registration will require re-evaluation of the student's entire program and may result in termination.

Time to Completion (PhD)

Full-time

All Ph.D. students admitted as full-time students and admitted on the basis of a master's degree must complete the Ph.D. degree requirements within six calendar years after the date of initial Ph.D. registration unless their specific program provides for a different time limit. Terms of non-registration are equated to full-time registration terms when calculating the overall time to program completion.

Part-time

All Ph.D. students admitted as part-time students must complete the degree requirements within nine calendar years after the date of initial Ph.D. registration. Terms of non-registration are equated to part-time registration terms when calculating the overall time to program completion. A change of a student's status from part-time to full-time status will result in a pro-rated reduction in the required time to completion for each subsequent term of full-time study.

Failure to complete the program within the prescribed timelines or failure to maintain continuous registration will require reevaluation of the student's entire program and may result in termination. *Information on time to completion policies are found in the Graduate Calendar, General Regulations, Section 13.

Extension of Time Limit

Program completion is expected within the *Time Limits to Program Completion* as set out in the Graduate Calendar section 13:

<https://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/gradregulations/#timelimits>.

Requests for an extension of time to complete program requirements are considered only in exceptional circumstances and are initiated within the department with decisions made by Graduate Studies. Extensions are usually given for a maximum of one year (three terms).

Review the **Extension Policy and Procedures for Graduate** students

(<https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/extension-policy-and-procedures/>) and note the specific requirements for an approved extension for Master's Students and the requirements for an approved PhD Student Extension.

A complete request for an extension must be submitted at least one month prior to the student's deadline to complete their program.

The online Extension Request form is available here: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/program-extension-form/>

Working and Being a Student

Many graduate students hold employment other than a teaching assistant position. Such outside work can be an important source of income, professional connection, and balance. Working for 10-15 hours a week while being a full-time student can be very beneficial. Yet a workload of 20 or more hours is generally incompatible with making good progress as a graduate student and producing high quality academic work. If you need to work many hours a week in order to support yourself (and your family), please talk to us about pursuing the degree (or the remainder of the degree) as a part-time student.

Continuous Registration in Thesis, Research Essay, or Independent Research Project

Any graduate student (full-time or part-time), after initial registration in a thesis or research essay, must maintain continuous registration in all successive terms (including the term in which the student is examined) until their thesis, or research essay is completed. Completion (with regards to the thesis) means that any modifications that may have been required, have been completed to the satisfaction of the supervisor and the final, defended, revised (if necessary) project has been submitted. Students should note that faculty approval to register in the thesis is given on the understanding that the student will be in regular contact with their supervisor, and that the final major research project will be actively pursued in each term of registration.

Deposit of Thesis Copies

In the case of a thesis, registration must be maintained until the thesis is electronically deposited to Carleton Central. Should the final, defended, revised (if necessary) thesis not be deposited by the last day of registration in a given term, the student will be required to register into the new term.

Loss of Status and Reinstatement

Any graduate student who remains unregistered in their degree program for three terms (twelve months) will lose their graduate student status. Students whose files have been closed as a result of failure to observe continuous registration requirements must apply for reinstatement if they wish to resume their studies. If reinstated, students must pay a reinstatement charge, plus the equivalent of 1.0 credit tuition fees for each term in which they failed to register, as well as for the current term registration.

Exemption from Registration

Students who have valid reasons for not registering for a term may apply for permission to remain unregistered. Students in these situations can apply for a Leave of Absence (LOA). LOA's require an application, which must be submitted to the Dept. of Law and Legal Studies for approval and recommendation to FGPA.

https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Academic_Registration-Change-Form.pdf

Guidelines regarding registration, exemption from registration and other regulations is available in the Graduate Calendar, General Regulations (section 8):

<https://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/gradregulations/#registration>

Coursework

The coursework is the foundation of your MA or PhD degree. Most full-time students complete the course work within the first two terms of their registration in the program by successfully completing 1.5 – 2.0 credits of course work per term. MA students pursuing a Major Research Paper (MRP) or the coursework-only option will possibly take courses in their second year of studies.

The courses allow you to build your research profile by combining required courses in Legal Studies with courses that build on your strengths or challenge you to develop new skills. The Legal Studies graduate courses are all taught by full-time faculty members who are experts at interdisciplinary research in Legal Studies and beyond.

What the Numbers Mean: 5000, 6000

In general, the Department of Law and Legal Studies aims to keep graduate courses open for all graduate students. The only exceptions are the mandatory core courses that are only open to the students in their respective programs.

Mandatory Courses (MA)

LAWS 5000 and 5001 are mandatory core courses for MA students. LAWS 5000 offers an introduction to theoretical approaches in Legal Studies. LAWS 5001 prepares MA students to craft a proposal for a research project. Full-time students will typically take LAWS 5000 in their first term of study and LAWS 5001 in their second term of study. Part-time students should take LAWS 5000 at the earliest opportunity, but take LAWS 5001 towards the end of their coursework in preparation for their thesis or MRE (if applicable).

Mandatory Courses (PhD)

LAWS 6000 and LAWS 6001 are mandatory core courses for PhD students. The PhD Field Seminars LAWS 6002 (Law, Regulation, and Governance), LAWS 6003 (Human Rights, Citizenship, and Global Justice), and LAWS 6004 (Law, Crime, and Social Order) offer doctoral students a rigorous overview of distinct interdisciplinary fields of research and are open to interested MA students.

Please consult the Graduate Program Supervisor if you have any questions about course selection.

Tutorial/Directed Reading Courses (LAWS 5900, 5901, 6010)

If a student has a strong research interest in an area that will not be covered in regular courses, they can approach a faculty member about pursuing a tutorial/directed reading (TDR) course. The student proposes the area and typically sets up a reading list and an assignment structure in consultation with the professor.

These courses are not regular courses: they are not scheduled, they depend on the initiative and agreement of the student and the supervising faculty member, and they are taught by faculty members outside of, and in addition to, their regular course load.

Directed reading courses can offer a more specialized and in-depth study of an area than might be possible in seminar classes. But they include no classroom discussion and interaction and also typically much less contact time with a faculty member than a regular seminar (with twelve three-hour sessions) would offer.

Directed reading courses require the approval of the supervising faculty member, the Graduate Supervisor and, if the supervising faculty member is not full-time faculty in Law & Legal Studies,

the Department Chair. The forms are available on the department's website:

MA TDR Form: <https://carleton.ca/law/wp-content/uploads/sites/110/TDR-Permission-Form-Updated-2018.doc.pdf>

PhD TDR Form : <https://carleton.ca/law/wp-content/uploads/sites/110/2025/12/PHD-TDR-Form.pdf>

Taking Courses in Other Programs

While the Department of Law and Legal Studies offers a range of interdisciplinary courses, we know that interdisciplinary inquiry in legal studies is not necessarily confined to this Department. You are encouraged to take some graduate-level courses in another programs. If you would like any guidance on suitable courses, please discuss with the Graduate Supervisor.

If you wish to take a graduate-level course in another department, you must first get approval from the Graduate Program Supervisor in order for the course to count towards your MA or PhD degree. Email the Graduate Program Supervisor setting out the course name, number and a brief explanation of how the course relates to your scholarly plans. The Graduate Program Supervisor will then reply by email granting permission, or suggesting alternative courses (if relevant). You can then proceed to pursue registration in the normal route or if this is not possible, by submitting a Registration Override Request (ROR) on Carleton Central. The Graduate Program Supervisor's permission to use a course towards the requirements for completion of the MA or PhD program does not grant permission to actually register into the course, you may still need to contact the instructor and/or the department offering the course in order to obtain permission to register. In order to request permission from the home department offering the course, you would need to submit an ROR. Information on doing this is available here: <https://carleton.ca/registration/override-requests/>

Students wishing extra instruction in quantitative methods should contact the Graduate Program Supervisor about access to such courses in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

Grades

The following table illustrates the relationship between letter grades, percentages, and levels of achievement relative to the expectations for MA and PhD students.

Grade	Percentage	Description
A+	90-100	Exceptional work that is technically flawless and original. Work demonstrates insight, understanding and independent application or extension of course expectations; often of publishable quality.
A	85-89	Excellent work that demonstrates a very high level of integration of materials/ relevant scholarship. Work demonstrates insight, understanding and independent application or extension of course expectations.
A-	80-84	Very good quality work that represents a high level of integration, comprehensiveness and complexity, as well as mastery of relevant techniques/concepts.
B+	77-79	Represents a largely satisfactory level of integration, comprehensiveness, and complexity; demonstrates a sound level of analysis with no major weaknesses.
B	73-76	Acceptable work that fulfills the minimum expectations of the course. Represents a satisfactory level of integration of key concepts/procedures. However, comprehensiveness or technical skills may be lacking.
B-	70-72	Acceptable and somewhat fulfills the course expectations. Work reveals some deficiencies in knowledge, understanding or techniques.
C+	67-69	<p>Unacceptable work at the graduate level. Represents an unacceptable level of integration, comprehensiveness and complexity. Mastery of some relevant techniques or concepts lacking.</p> <p><i>(Carleton University requirements: "A grade of B- or better must normally be obtained in each course credited towards the master's degree" and a grade of B- must be obtained in each course credited towards the PhD. Grades below B- may result in the student's removal from the Program. See http://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/gradregulations/administrationoftheregulations/#11</i></p>
C	63-66	
C-	60-62	
D	50-59	
F	0-49	Fail. Unsatisfactory performance, even though student completes course requirements including submission of final paper/ completion of final exam.

Graduation

Students must apply to graduate by the following deadlines:

- August 31 (for fall graduation – in November)
- November 30 (for winter graduation – in February)

Please note: There are no convocation ceremonies for winter term graduates however, all students graduating in winter (February) will be invited to attend the spring convocation ceremonies in June)

- April 1 (for spring graduation – in June)

Further convocation details are available at: <https://convocation.carleton.ca/>

Funding

Internal Funding

Full-time students entering their first year of the program may be eligible for an internal funding package that is sent in conjunction with the offer of admission. There are two main components of internal funding: teaching assistantships and scholarships.

In addition, the nomination process for “donor funded” or “endowed” awards opens in September. Departments nominate students; so, if the Graduate Program Administrator asks for expressions of interest, please make sure to indicate that you would like to be considered for scholarships that you are eligible to be nominated for and complete the application as required.

More information is available on the FGPA website:

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

Teaching Assistantships

At the MA level, those offered teaching assistantships are awarded for four terms over two years. Departmental scholarships are awarded primarily for the first year of full-time study although there are some scholarships that are awarded for two years.

At the PhD level, those offered teaching assistantships are awarded for up to ten terms over five consecutive calendar years. Departmental scholarships can be awarded for a maximum of four years.

Please note that the continuation of funding from year to year is dependent upon satisfactory progress and satisfactory academic performance.

For further information, please see:

Terms and Conditions Of Admission And Funding: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/new->

[students/terms-and-conditions/](#)

Or, the CUPE 4600 Collective Agreement: <https://cupe4600.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/227/2023/01/collective-agreement-unit-1.pdf>

Applicants to the MA and PhD may receive offers of TA positions as part of their funding package, if applicable. These positions will normally be taken up in the Fall and Winter terms. TAs are part of a union (CUPE 4600, <http://4600.cupe.ca/>). The collective agreement governs the allocation of TA positions, the compensation, the hours, the eligible duties of TAs, and conflict resolution processes.

As a TA, you become an important participant in the Department's large undergraduate program. Your role as a teacher, marker, and role model is crucial to the education of many students. At the same time, you will learn a lot about teaching, pedagogy, problem solving, and professional interactions. Since undergraduate students and professors rely on you and trust your judgment, we ask that you only accept a TA position for any given term if you know that you are motivated and able to fulfil the terms of the contract.

Two more important things to remember before starting duties as a TA:

First: log your hours. Please keep track of and log all the hours you spend for your TA work. You should never work more hours than you are paid for and you need to be able to account for the hours you have been paid for.

Second, if you have questions, are unsure about how to deal with a situation in your capacity as a TA, need help, or would like to brainstorm about teaching strategies, please contact the TA Mentor or the Graduate Program Supervisor for the Department of Law and Legal Studies.

TA Orientation and Training

All TAs will be required to attend a TA training sessions in September that are organized by Department of Law and Legal Studies and by FGPA.

For more information on TA orientation and training, please see:

- <https://carleton.ca/law/ma-program/#ta-information>
- <https://carleton.ca/law/phd-program/#ta-information>
- <https://carleton.ca/deputyprovost/faculty-affairs/teaching-assistants/>

Important: In order to maintain your funding (including TA positions), you need to maintain full-time status. Continuous registration requirements are outlined above. If you withdraw from the program, change to part-time status or take a leave of absence, you may lose your funding. For TA's who need to take an LOA, they should apply for a Leave From Duties (LFD), in order to hold

their TA funding for a future term(s).

Priority Extension Application

In accordance with the CU-CUPE4600 (Unit 1) Collective Agreement, once a Teaching Assistant (“TA”) exhausts their priority terms, they may apply once to the University to have their priority extended for one term for a Master’s student and up to two terms for a Ph.D. student. The TA is required to apply to extend their priority using the attached Priority Extension TA Application Form. Once the form is completed by the TA, the form is submitted to their program department (the “Department”) via email.

The Department will provide the required information and submit the form to the Dean’s Office. The Dean’s Office will either approve, partially approve, or deny the request for priority extension and submit the form and the decision to the Academic Relations Coordinator in the Office of the Deputy Provost.

The Academic Relations Coordinator will communicate the decision to the TA (e.g., approved, partially approved, or denied). If approved, the Academic Relations Coordinator will direct the Department to submit an in-program revision and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGPA) will be responsible for building the priority TA award(s) as approved by the Department and the Dean’s Office.

The deadline to apply for priority extension for the winter term is:

- Fall / Winter Terms: August 1
- Winter Term: December 1
- Summer Term April 1

The form to apply is available here: <https://carleton.ca/deputyprovost/cu-files/priority-extension-teaching-assistant-application-form/>

External Funding

There are a number of external scholarships available to graduate students. The Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) scholarships are among the more frequent and lucrative scholarship opportunities. Both scholarships have deadlines normally between October and January, may have GPA eligibility criteria, and require that you formulate a clear research program.

Writing the research statement requires thought, research, planning, and a lot of revisions. For PhD students and MA students interested in PhD study, applying for an OGS and/or SSHRC fellowship should be regarded as an integral part of scholarly life. Applying for such awards is an important skill.

The external scholarships are competitive. The adjudication committees pay attention to the applicants' scholarly records (depending on the level of study: grades, conference presentations, publications), reference letters, and research statements. While it is important to devote time and thought to crafting the research statements, it is also important that you don't let the outcome of a scholarship competition define your worth or promise as a researcher.

Ontario Graduate Scholarship

The Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) program encourages excellence in graduate studies. The scholarship is awarded for one academic year, consisting of either two or three consecutive terms. An award is not granted for one term. The value of the OGS is currently \$5,000 per term up to a maximum of \$15,000. The province of Ontario contributes two-thirds of this amount and the university provides one-third. Please check the OGS website for eligibility requirements, application forms, and conditions of the award.

(<https://osap.gov.on.ca/OSAPPortal/en/A-ZListofAid/PRDR019245.html>)

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Scholarships

SSHRC has both MA and PhD awards, which are described in more detail at: https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/umbrella_programs-programme_cadre/talent-eng.aspx

The SSHRC awards tend to be more remunerative than the OGS, eligible students are encouraged to apply for both.

Applying for External Scholarships

It is strongly recommended that students who intend to apply for external scholarships take the following steps:

- **Check your GPA.** The OGS has minimum GPA requirements in order to be eligible to apply. Please make sure that you check the minimum requirements to ensure that you meet the threshold. If you are not sure, please contact the Graduate Program Administrator. SSHRC no longer requires a first-class average eligibility requirement, but it is still important to have a strong GPA in order to remain competitive for this award.
- **Find faculty support.** If you are an incoming MA student, the Graduate Program Supervisor is your most important point of contact at this stage. They can give you advice on how to craft and refine your statement, how to recruit referees, find a mentor, and what to list on your application. If you are an incoming PhD student, your faculty mentor and your instructor in LAWS 6001 will help you. If you are a continuing student, your supervisor will be your main point of contact at this stage.
- **Revise and edit and revise (repeatedly) the statement.** The application consists of three main parts (statement, academic record, reference letters), but at the point of the application you only have control over one component: the statement. Share it with your peers and your mentor/supervisor, and keep revising it.
- **Meet the deadline.** That one is obvious, right?

MA PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Overview

There are three possible routes to completing the MA in Legal Studies: Master's Research Essay, Master's Thesis, and coursework-only.

Students pursuing the **Master's Research Essay (MRE) stream** must complete:

- 4.0 credits of course work that includes the required courses LAWS 5000 and LAWS 5001, and
- 1.0 credit research essay.

Students pursuing the **Master's Thesis stream** must complete:

- 3.0 credits of course work that includes the required courses LAWS 5000 and LAWS 5001, and
- 2.0 credit thesis and oral examination.

Students pursuing the **all-coursework stream** must complete:

- 5.0 credits of course work that includes the required courses LAWS 5000 and LAWS 5001.

Choosing Between a Research Essay, Coursework only, and Thesis

The key difference between the thesis and the research essay route in the MA Legal Studies is in the balance between course work and independent research. The research essay option allows you to combine more breadth in your course work with a smaller-sized research project (approximately 40-60 pages). The thesis option presents more opportunities for guided research on a larger project (approximately 70-100 pages). A research essay should reflect an original understanding and interpretation of the field(s) studied. A thesis, in contrast, should represent a distinct and original contribution to the field, based on primary research.

It is recommended that students who intend to pursue a PhD upon the completion of their MA should choose either the Thesis or the Major Research Essay option. Both paths offer opportunity for independent research that would serve as a stepping-stone for potential future PhD study and research. While PhD programs will generally not rule out admitting students who have completed a coursework-only MA, those students may face the disadvantage of not having completed a larger research project before embarking on their PhD Thesis. The coursework-only option is especially suitable for students who are studying part-time and/or prefer to acquire expertise in more areas of research rather than focusing on a smaller area for an in-depth research project.

A more detailed discussion of the two options with research projects is outlined in "Guidelines for MA Theses and Research Essays", downloadable from the Department of Law and Legal

Studies website:

<https://carleton.ca/law/wp-content/uploads/sites/110/mathesisresearchessayguidelinesmay08.pdf>

All students should consult this resource. This will be on the exam. (No it won't, but thank you very much for paying attention. This guide will help you make important decisions.)

Moving from One Stream to Another

Students have a choice of enrolling in any of the three routes when they initially apply to the program. If, at some point during your MA studies you wish to change streams, it is possible to do so. Please contact the Graduate Program Administrator to begin the process of amending the structure of your program if you decide to change streams.

Finding and Working with your MA (MRE/Thesis) Supervisor

Full-time MA students should start looking for a thesis or MRE supervisor in the Winter term of their first year in conjunction with their work in LAWS 5001. The research supervisor can also help you make the choice between choosing the Thesis, MRE, or coursework path. Part-time MA students should start looking for a supervisor when they are enrolled in LAWS 5001.

Your research supervisor will support and guide you through the research process. They should be familiar with a good part of the literature and/or methodology relevant to your proposed area of research. Your supervisor may require you to complete a proposal that sets out the scope of your project.

Your supervisor will normally be a full-time faculty member in the Department of Law and Legal Studies. All tenured and tenure-track faculty members are allowed to supervise MA students. A complete list of all faculty members in the Department of Law and Legal Studies including their areas of expertise, is available here: <http://www.carleton.ca/law/faculty-and-staff/department-faculty>. If a student chooses an adjunct research professor, a professor emeritus, or a faculty member within one year of retirement as the supervisor, they are required to have a co-supervisor (at least nominally). The full guideline is available here: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/thesis-requirements/graduate-supervision-appointments-policy-2/>

You cannot register for your MRE or Thesis if you don't have a supervisor. A faculty member is not your supervisor until they have signed the departmental form of agreement and this has been approved by the Graduate Supervisor. The form is available on our website here: <https://carleton.ca/law/wp-content/uploads/sites/110/MA-Supervision-Committee-Form-2021-2022.pdf>

Strategies for Finding a Research Supervisor

Finding a supervisor is an important part of the path towards a research project. Please be assured that all faculty members in Law and Legal Studies feel collectively responsible for and committed to helping you find the most appropriate supervisor for your project. This means that you can and should draw on these resources and be assured that the department (staff and faculty) will support you on your journey.

The following strategies can be very helpful:

- 1. Be a good departmental citizen and be present.** You will probably take six courses in your first year in the program in which you have the chance to meet potential supervisors. Departmental events such as lectures, colloquia, and workshops are great opportunities for meeting and observing potential supervisors.
- 2. Have a plan.** In most cases, you should have identified an area of research and a few key research questions before you approach a potential supervisor. If you have a short document (1-2 pages) that outlines your interests, questions, and possibly your method, it will be much easier for potential supervisors to assess whether they would be the most suitable faculty member for your project.
- 3. Ask around.** If you are unsure about possible supervisors, you can start by asking faculty members you already know for recommendations. They might know of connections between your interests and our colleague's interests and expertise. Faculty members are open to these kinds of conversations and will not take offence that they are not being approached as a potential supervisor. If in doubt, feel free to ask the Graduate Supervisor for recommendations.
- 4. Make connections, meet potential supervisors.** If you already have a few potential supervisors in mind when you start the program, you might want to make sure that you see them in action either in classes you take or at research presentations they give. This allows you to see different approaches to research, and it allows potential supervisors to get to know you.
- 5. Ask politely, and know there's a range of responses between "yes" and "no."** You should only ask a faculty member to be your research supervisor once you are really sure that you want to work with them. You have your reasons for asking them, so don't be shy about telling them why you think they would be the best supervisor for you and your project. The approach to research and supervision might turn out to be more important than the direct topic.
- 6. Listen to responses carefully.** The response might not be an immediate "yes." Instead, you might be starting a conversation about what you're looking for in a supervisor and who would be the best match. Quite often, the response is "I think my colleagues B and C would actually be better suited because their theoretical approach or methodology aligns much closer with your plans." If you don't think this is the case, tell them why. Or, a faculty member might have taken on so

many supervisions that they can't commit to another one, in which case you should respect their decision, and follow up on suggested alternatives.

7. Consult with the Graduate Supervisor. If you would like any advice or suggestions during this process, please consult the Graduate Supervisor. They have guided many students through the process of finding a supervisor and know their colleagues. They can assist you in finding a research supervisor.

Working with your Thesis/MRE Supervisor

The full university guidelines on graduate supervision are available here:

<https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/graduate-supervision-responsibilities-expectations-policy/>

The following list sums up the most important expectations and responsibilities.

The Supervisor

- Primary responsibility for supervision lies with the supervisor.
- The supervisor is expected to respond to and, when appropriate, approve the overall design of the thesis/MRE.
- The supervisor is expected to read and comment on drafts of portions or chapters of the project and to return them to the student within a reasonable and previously announced period of time. For short documents, the turnaround time might be a week, but for a full Thesis draft, a month is not uncommon. The turnaround time will depend on the supervisor's workload and commitments at specific times of the year.
- The supervisor will help the student develop a realistic timeline for the completion of the project.
- The supervisor will advise the student if the project is ready to be handed in (for MRE) or go to defence (Thesis).
- The supervisor will mentor the student. This might include advice on conference presentations, publications, and pursuing further studies or job opportunities.

The Student

- The student is responsible for identifying the area of research, questions, relevant literature, and methodology for the research project.
- The student is expected to maintain regular contact with their supervisor, especially at the very beginning and end of the project.
- The student should discuss the progress of research regularly with their supervisor, even when no written work is being handed in for revision.
- The student should expect and welcome comments and criticism.
- The student is responsible for setting up a timeline for the project completion, have it

approved by the supervisor, and meeting the deadlines contained in that document.

- The student must allow readers sufficient time for making comments.
- The student is responsible for meeting **all** deadlines, including those set by the University.
- If the student has the impression that communication with a committee member (second reader) has broken down or expectations on the project diverge, they will consult their research supervisor. If the student has the impression that their work relationship with the research supervisor is overly strained, they will consult the Graduate Program Supervisor. (If the research supervisor is the Graduate Program Supervisor, the student will contact the Department Chair.)

Establishing a Working Relationship with your Thesis/MRE Supervisor

Your research supervisor is your mentor, advisor, and advocate. It is very important that the student/supervisor relationship is understood as a professional relationship, and that this understanding is reflected in clear, timely and regular communication throughout the research process.

Email communication is convenient and has become standard in academic work, but it is not always the most appropriate medium for discussing specific issues. On the basis of their own experience, your supervisor might suggest meetings in person, by phone or by videoconference in order to deal with specific issues instead of emails. Likewise, if you feel that you need a meeting in person, you should ask for one. It is important that all communication is clear (to avoid misunderstandings) and at the same time courteous and respectful.

You might sometimes wonder about how much information is appropriate to share with your supervisor (or the Graduate Supervisor). To a large degree this is up to you. If you are dealing with any situation that has an adverse impact on your academic work (even if there is not anything that your supervisor or the department can do to help), you might want to share this information confidentially because it allows faculty to help and accommodate you where appropriate.

Similarly, it is up to you to talk to your supervisor about any problems you have in writing or researching your project. Your supervisor might know of strategies for dealing with common issues such as 'writers' block' or not knowing when to stop reading and to start writing. Quite often, supervisors appreciate insights into what students feel they are struggling with because this helps them to advise and support students appropriately.

While the absent-minded professor is a cliché, it is true that faculty members sometimes forget things, such as (occasionally) responding to an email you wrote. If you feel that sufficient time has passed and you had been promised a response on a question or a chapter, don't be afraid to

ask again.

Thinking about DRAFTS

For many students, the MA Thesis or MRE represents the first time that they submit drafts as opposed to finished pieces to a professor, receive feedback, and are then expected to incorporate the feedback into their writing. While every supervisor will have a distinct style of commenting, annotating, and discussing drafts, a few points are worth remembering. First, it is impossible to determine the necessary or sufficient number of drafts for a good research project. Much depends on the writing and the ability and willingness to deal with comments and suggestions. Quite often, it is more important to follow the spirit of the comment/suggestion and to ask oneself why this point was not clear or convincing to your supervisor than to follow the letter of the suggestion. It is easier to see that something doesn't work than to make guesses as to what the writer had intended to say. Suggestions should be taken seriously but not necessarily literally.

How many drafts does it take and which drafts should be shared? It depends. Some writers produce first drafts that are very close in quality and style to a polished final version. Other writers need to go through lots of drafts in order to develop their arguments. If you need lots of drafts, it might be wise to not share the very first one, but a more polished draft that represents your ideas and arguments convincingly.

Time Flies: Plans and Deadlines

It is important to have a clear plan and take the necessary steps to follow it. This means planning backwards from the desired graduation date. Please allow one to two months from the completion of the first full draft to the submission of the copy for defence (Thesis) or grading (MRE). The plan might have to be adjusted if the student either fails to meet deadlines or produces drafts of insufficient quality. The following is an example of a (fictitious) Thesis timeline:

- September 10th: Meeting to establish a timeline for the MA Thesis.
 - Desired graduation: June (next year).
 - Deadline for the Thesis submission post-defence: May 13th.
 - Intended Thesis submission: May 1st.
 - Intended defence date: April 10th
 - Thesis submission pre-defence: March 20th
 - Full draft (85 pages plus bibliography) submitted to supervisor and second reader: February 15th (read, returned, and discussed by March 10th)
 - Chapter 3 & conclusion draft (35 pages): Jan 5th (to be read, discussed by Jan 20th)
 - Chapter 2 draft (25 pages): Dec 1st (to be read and returned by Dec 15th)
 - Chapter 1 draft (25 pages): Nov 1st (to be read and returned by Nov 15th)
 - Proposal draft 2 (15 pages): Oct 1st (to be read and returned by Oct 10th)

- Proposal draft 1 (10 pages): Sept 15th (to be read and returned by Sept 20th)

Timelines are based on the following understandings about expectations and responsibilities:

- All deadlines are agreed upon between the student and the supervisor.
- It is clear that if the quality of draft chapters is such that the supervisor needs to see another draft before the student can proceed, the Thesis will take more time.
- If the student exceeds a deadline, they will (1) notify the supervisor, and (2) be aware that this might get the feedback pushed back by a significant amount of time since the supervisor has competing research, conference and supervision deadlines (they will fulfil obligations to others who have met deadlines before fitting a late chapter in).
- The anticipated feedback times are based on the projected chapter lengths. If a chapter or proposal is significantly longer than expected, the supervisor might need more time to read it and comment on it.
- If the supervisor has agreed to a specific turnaround time (and ideally confirmed that in an email) but not responded by that date, the student can and should follow up.

Missed deadlines mean longer research projects. Remember that the point of a deadline is to keep you on track to the completion of a project you care about. Communicate openly and clearly if you are experiencing problems.

The Master's Thesis and Preparation for Defence

The Committee

Students writing a thesis will choose a thesis defence committee in consultation with their supervisor. The second reader may be from outside the department, if appropriate. The second reader's role is to offer advice and guidance on the student's research work, particularly on those aspects that fall outside the supervisor's area of expertise. They are minimally expected to approve the student's proposal, read and comment on the thesis once it is completed in draft form, and be fully involved in the preparation of the examination copy of the thesis. The external examiner is a faculty member from outside the department; they may be based at a different university. The external examiner is expected to be present in person at the Thesis defence, or if applicable, may attend virtually by videoconference.

Students writing an MRE will choose a second reader in consultation with their supervisor. The second reader may be from the department. The MRE will be graded according to the regular letter grade scale. The final grade for the MRE is determined in consultation between the supervisor and second reader.

Preparing for the MA Thesis Defence

The candidate and thesis committee are expected to notify the Graduate Supervisor and Graduate Program Administrator **at least** two weeks in advance of the date that they intend to submit the electronic version of the examination copy of the thesis.

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs specifies the requirements for thesis and MRE's as: "The master's thesis should embody the results of successful scholarly research in a specialized area. It should exhibit the candidate's knowledge of recognized techniques of investigation and critical evaluation, and be presented in an organized and systematic way."

Please consult the Thesis Requirements Checklist: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/thesis-checklist/>

You must upload the pre-defence copy of the thesis via Carleton Central. The instructions for the Electronic Thesis Deposit are available here: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/electronic/>. In addition, you may be required to submit a hard copy of the thesis for a member(s) of the examination committee. Please note that students must complete the Academic Integrity Statement, FIPPA and Carleton University Thesis License Agreement online through Carleton Central. Students will not be able to proceed to thesis upload until all three agreements are complete.

Thesis Defence

Students completing the program following the thesis stream are required to undertake an oral examination of their thesis. The thesis supervisor, external and internal examiners will pose two rounds of questions. Thesis defences are technically examinations, but they should also be seen as great opportunities for the discussion and recognition of the student's MA research. If you have any concerns about the thesis defence, please talk to your thesis supervisor.

Please consult the Thesis Examination Policy, Faculty of Graduate Studies for more information about the thesis defence: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/thesis-requirements/thesis-forms-templates-policies/>

Plagiarism

Students should consult the Graduate Calendar concerning plagiarism and academic integrity. The Department does not tolerate any breaches of University policy on integrity and ethical academic practice. Please see: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Recommended Timeline for MA Thesis or MA Research Essay

Time Period	THESIS	MRE
1 st Semester	Course Work	Course Work
2 nd Semester	Course Work Begin work on proposal/narrow research area as part of LAWS 5001	Course Work Begin work on proposal/narrow research area as part of LAWS 5001, as appropriate.
End of 2 nd Semester	Meet with one or more possible supervisors. Supervisor should be confirmed by end of second semester/start of Spring/Summer.	Meet with one or more possible supervisors. Supervisor should be confirmed at the latest early in the Fall (third semester).
3 rd Semester (Could be Fall term, second year)	Register in thesis course for both semesters. Meet with supervisor and agree upon a schedule for completion.	Complete course work. Students may choose to register in MRE course in either or both fall and winter semesters. Meet with supervisor and agree upon a schedule for completion.
4 th Semester (Could be Winter term, second year)	Full draft to be completed by end of first month/start of second month (i.e. Jan/Feb). Thesis copies for examination due at start of third month (i.e. March). Final print copies for examination & submission due early in fourth month (consult Graduate Calendar for dates)	Full draft to be completed by second month. Final draft submitted to Supervisor and Second Reader by end of third month (i.e. March or Nov at the latest).

PHD PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Overview

The PhD Legal Studies is designed as a 4-year program in which students will complete 4.5 credits as follows:

1. Course work amounting to 2.5 credits, of which the following are required courses:
 - LAWS 6000 Doctoral Seminal in Legal Studies [0.5 credits];
 - LAWS 6001 Proseminar in Legal Studies [0.5 credits];
 - At least ONE of LAWS 6002, 6003, or 6004 [0.5 credits];
 - Optional courses (with approval of Graduate Supervisor): 1.0 credits from within the Law Department (at 5000 or 6000 level) or from another Department/Faculty.

Some students will be advised to take LAWS 5000. This will constitute part of your 2.5 course credit requirement.

2. Comprehensive Exam, LAWS 6095 [1.0 credits];
3. Thesis Proposal, LAWS 6096[1.0 credits]; and
4. PhD Thesis, LAWS 6909 [0.0 credits].

Doctoral Candidacy

A Ph.D. student who has completed all of their program milestones except the Ph.D. thesis shall be given the status of Ph.D. Candidate. It is expected that full-time Ph.D. students will advance to candidacy by the end of their third year (ninth term) of study. Failure to achieve candidacy by the end of the third year of study will result in loss of status and removal from the program. In exceptional circumstances, at the end of the third year, a student may apply for a formal extension of up to one year (maximum three terms) through the Office of Graduate Studies. Part-time Ph.D. students must achieve candidacy by the end of their fifth year (15th term) of study. (*Section 13.3 Graduate Calendar Regulations*)

Time Frames

Full time students are expected to complete the course work component in the Fall and Winter terms of the first year, the comprehensive exam by December of the second year, and the proposal in the spring of the second year. The remainder of the time is dedicated to researching and writing the thesis. In some cases, it might be advisable to take more time towards the completion of the comprehensive exam or the Thesis proposal. However, the PhD Thesis is the core of the PhD Program, and the individual research plan should allow sufficient time for this

component.

Year One – Course Work

In year one students will be required to complete 2.5 credits. 1.5 of these (3 half credits) are compulsory (6000, 6001 and field seminar), 1 credit (2 half credits) is comprised of electives. Electives can be courses offered in the Department of Law and Legal Studies, including 5000-level courses, or in other departments/faculties.

Where students do not have a background in legal studies, or have not been exposed to relevant aspects of social and political theory, the Graduate Supervisor may suggest or require students to take LAWS 5000: *Theories of Law and Social Transformation* or LAWS 5001: *Legal Method & Social Inquiry*, in order to become more firmly rooted in the field. These courses would count as one half-credit elective each.

Important: Some students choose not to register in the summer term of first, second or third year for personal and financial reasons since continuous registration is not required until initial registration in the thesis. Failure to register may impact your externally awarded scholarships that you may hold, such as OGS and SSHRC as well as internal funding. Please consult the Graduate Program Administrator.

Year Two – Comprehensive Exam and Thesis Proposal

The comprehensive exam is normally completed in the first term of second year. See the *Comprehensive Exam LAWS 6095 Guidelines* attached to this handbook and on the website.

Upon completing the comprehensive exam, students will start working on the **thesis proposal**, which should be defended by the **spring of the second year**. The thesis proposal will normally build on the themes identified through the comprehensive as well as other themes and areas of interest identified in course work. These areas of interest will serve to assist students, in shaping their independent research projects.

Years Three and Four – The Thesis

During the final years in the program students will undertake a major, independent research project supervised by a faculty member in the Department with the additional guidance of 2 committee members who will normally come from the Department of Law and Legal Studies or related departments. Normally the thesis will be defended by the spring of the fourth year.

PhD Comprehensive Examinations Guidelines

General Description

The comprehensive examination is an integral part of the process of doctoral study, located between coursework and the preparation of the thesis proposal. It is a period of consolidation, reflection, and a link to the PhD thesis area. The Legal Studies comprehensive exam allows students, in consultation with their comprehensive exam committee (the supervisor and two other faculty members), to focus more specifically on their topic areas and encourages them to be the architect of their own research agenda.

In the process of satisfying the comprehensive requirements, you must be able to demonstrate to your Comprehensive Exam committee (herein committee), your command of a particular body of literature and the demonstration of a professional skill. You define the body of literature for your comprehensive exam in consultation with your committee. The body of literature can be a traditionally framed area of inquiry, or it can sit at the intersection of two different sets of literatures that you are seeking to bring into conversation. In all cases, the comprehensive examination should cover a **narrower** field of knowledge than the PhD thesis and should lead students to engage with ‘foundational’ literature (to be defined with the committee).

Comprehensive Exam Committee Membership: The committee for your comprehensive exam is normally made up of three members: a supervisor and two committee members. The committee members will be determined in consultation with your supervisor; one of them may be from outside the department. Committee members are chosen for their knowledge of a circumscribed body of literature in a specific area pertaining to law and legal studies. The committee used for your comprehensive exam may be different from the committee established for your PhD proposal/thesis.

Timing

Registration in the comprehensive examination (LAWS 6095) takes place **after** completion of the coursework requirements. Planning for the comprehensive examination should begin in the third term (summer) of the first year of the program. The comprehensive examination must be completed no later than **five** terms after initial full-time registration, and **ten** terms after *initial* part-time registration. It is in everyone’s interest that the comprehensive exam is completed in a timely manner in order to allow the student time to focus on the PhD proposal and thesis. In order to facilitate this, it is imperative that the scope of the comprehensive exam is sufficiently narrow.

Missed deadlines with respect to the comprehensive exam will lead to a review of your standing in the program.

Comprehensive Exam formats

The Department of Law and Legal Studies offers two different comprehensive exam formats: (1) literature review; (2) course development. Each format allows students to combine the study of a field with the development of research and professional skills.

1. **Course Development:** The course design option gives you the opportunity to develop a course under the guidance of the comprehensive exam committee. You are also encouraged to seek advice on the pedagogical aspects of the course design from the Teaching and Learning Centre (EDC). The proposed course will normally be intended for 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students. The completed comprehensive exam should include:
 - A complete course outline that follows the Department of Law and Legal Studies regulations.
 - An essay (20 pages) explaining the logic of the course, its conceptual boundaries, the reasons for the inclusion of the materials, learning objectives, and assignments.
 - Two class plans in a format of your choice (full lecture notes, seminar notes, or other formats as appropriate).
2. **Literature review:** This option gives you the opportunity to read, engage, and write about scholarly literature within a field defined by the student in consultation with the comprehensive exam committee. The written product will be a paper of no more than 12,000 words that synthesizes and analyzes the relevant literatures. While the paper is not an original research paper, it should critically engage with the scholarship under review and make arguments about the merits and limits of the literature.

Stages of the Comprehensive Exam

The comprehensive exam process is divided into three stages: (1) comprehensive exam proposal, (2) the reading for and writing of the comprehensive exam including incorporating supervisor feedback, and (3) revisions and defence. The suggested timeline for these stages is as follows: Following the completion of their coursework, students should take no longer than two to three months to write the comprehensive exam proposal and get it approved by committee (stage 1). Following approval of their comprehensive exam proposal, students should take no longer than four months to read for and write a comprehensive exam draft that can be reviewed by their supervisor. The process of review and revisions with the supervisor should take no longer than two months (stage 2). The length of stage 3 (committee revisions and defence) depends on whether the committee requires revisions, but it should not exceed a period of one month. In sum, the comprehensive exam should be defended in the second term of a student's second year in the PhD program.

Stage One: Comprehensive Exam Proposal

Upon registering in the comprehensive exam course (LAWS 6095), the student consults with the supervisor and the two committee members about the scope and format of the comprehensive

exam. The student should take no more than three months to prepare a comprehensive exam proposal.

For the **course development option**, the proposal includes the following: (1) The title and year level of the proposed course, (2) a description of the scope of the proposed course, (3) a statement of where the proposed course would fit in the curriculum (of the Department of Law and Legal Studies or another sample department), and (4) a list of 30 articles, chapters, and/or books that are being considered for inclusion in the course outline. While the proposal should be a good road map for the comprehensive exam, the final product may take a different shape than envisioned in the proposal. Students are encouraged to seek advice from their supervisors and committee members if they consider departing from the plan sketched in the proposal.

For the **literature review option**, the proposal includes the following items: (1) a framing question, (2) identification of the literature(s) to be analyzed, (3) a statement on why this focus has been chosen, and (4) a list of 25 to 30 articles, chapters, and/or books that will be included in the literature review.

The proposal is submitted to the comprehensive exam committee (the supervisor and two committee members). The committee has two weeks to provide feedback to the candidate. Any revisions to the proposal need to be completed within a month. In total, the preparation, revision, and completion of the comprehensive exam proposal should take no longer than two to three months.

Stage Two: Reading for and Writing the Comprehensive Exam

After the comprehensive exam proposal has been written and approved by the committee, the student reads for and writes the comprehensive exam. During this period, students may consult with the supervisor and committee members. Students have the option of sharing up to two drafts with the supervisor, who will give comments on the drafts to help the student improve the quality of the comprehensive exam. To allow for sufficient time for supervisor feedback and for revisions, it is important that the first draft is submitted no longer than four months after the approval of the proposal.

Stage Three: Revisions and Comprehensive Exam Defence

Once completed, the student will submit the comprehensive exam to their committee. The committee will review the exam and assess the quality of the submission. The committee can decide to authorize the defence or ask for revisions.

- (1) If the committee decides that the comprehensive exam is of good quality, the committee will authorize the Graduate Program Administrator to schedule the Comprehensive Exam

Defence. If the committee identifies minor issues with the comprehensive exam, the defence can still be authorized.

- (2) If the committee determines that the comprehensive exam is not of sufficient quality to be subject to an oral defence, the committee needs to clearly communicate revisions suggestions and requests to the student. The student will normally take no longer than one month to complete these revisions.
- (3) If the student has been required to revise the resubmit the comprehensive exam, they can consult with their supervisor during the revisions process. The revised comprehensive exam is submitted to the committee. The committee then decides if the revised comprehensive exam is (a) acceptable to proceed to a defence, or (b) not of sufficient quality to proceed to a defence. A resubmitted comprehensive exam that is not of sufficient quality to proceed to a defence will be marked as F (fail).

The comprehensive exam defence allows for a full discussion and appreciation of the comprehensive exam. The supervisor and the committee members can ask question about the submitted work as well as the readings that are cited/listed in it. The comprehensive exam defence follows the general format of MA Thesis defences at Carleton University (see page 23 above). Normally, all members of the committee will attend the comprehensive oral examination. If a member must be absent, that committee member should provide written comments and questions that will be presented at the oral defence. Comprehensive defences must be scheduled through the office of the Graduate Program Administrator. Such defences require a Chair to be assigned to guide the defence proceedings.

At the end of a comprehensive exam defence, a grade of Pass/Fail will normally be awarded.

PhD Thesis Proposal Guidelines

Overview

Each doctoral candidate must successfully complete and defend a thesis proposal. The proposal is written after the successful completion of the comprehensive exam and should be completed within a single semester of concentrated work. The proposal should be presented for defence by the end of the second year of full-time doctoral study. The proposal is defended at an oral examination conducted by the supervisory committee. Evaluation is on the basis of pass/fail. The proposal must be successfully defended before you can register in the Ph.D. thesis (LAWS 6909).

This guideline is to assist you in the preparation of your thesis proposals. You should work with your thesis supervisor in the preparation of your proposal.

Proposal Guidelines

Your proposal will have a working title and should be no less than 20 and no more than 30 pages. Formats and order will vary, but your proposal should include the following elements:

1. **Clear statement of research** question/research focus.
2. **Justification/working thesis:** Clear statement of why is this research focus necessary/relevant. In some cases, this section might include a preliminary answer to your research question.
3. **Literature Review:** Locate your project within the relevant literature, summarizing the main debates and analytical directions in the field. Your discussion should identify the gaps in the literature your research will speak to, and the contributions your project will make. This section should include not only a discussion of which bodies of scholarship you identify as relevant and why, but also a discussion of which literatures you are not considering and why.
4. **Key theoretical concepts:** Identify and define the key theoretical concepts through which you will be conceptualizing your analysis in abstract terms, anticipating how these concepts are contested. The theoretical framework will answer the question: “What language will I use to analyze the phenomenon at the heart of my project?” The theoretical concepts help the project exceed the limits of its specific object.
5. **Methodological Approaches:** Which research and analytical methods do you intend to use to answer the research questions you identify? What led you to these methods and what are some of strengths and limits of your choice of methods?
6. **Research Design:** Closely connected to your discussion of methodology, the section will explain the:
 - Time frame for the research;
 - Different stages in the process;
 - Need for/completion of ethics approval (if relevant, attach copies of your draft ethics application documents);
 - Sources of information for your thesis and any issues around access; and
 - Basic layout of thesis chapters: what will be discussed, roughly, in each chapter; how do the chapters build on one another.
7. **Bibliography:** Include a bibliography of relevant writing in the area.

Evaluation

Your thesis proposal does not have to be a rigid template for what follows afterwards, but it should offer a plausible and usable road map. Research questions may be altered or refined as the research process advances.

In examining the thesis proposal, your committee will consider:

- Has a viable and original dissertation topic been identified?
- Has the central research question or problem been clearly identified? Has its significance been justified?
- Does the proposal identify a theoretical field through which the research will be framed and analyzed?
- Does the proposal evidence a competent understanding and appreciation of the topic under consideration and the relevant scholarly literature?
- Will the method/s chosen allow the candidate to address the central research questions/problematic?
- Is the research plan (in terms of timing, access to material, logical flow) doable within a PhD thesis?
- Will this project make an original contribution to the field?

The proposal and defence will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis.

Language Information

As a graduate student, you have access to language classes and a unique chance to develop, improve, and maintain language proficiency.

Some students will need language skills (reading and possibly listening/speaking) for their PhD research. For these students, as your research agenda develops, you may need to consider if you have the language skills and, if necessary, how you can develop them.

Students who need to work with a language other than English for their PhD Thesis research have to be able to work in that language. It is important to assess the language needs for the desired PhD Thesis project and methodologies as soon as possible. You may need a few years of fairly intensive language training to develop your proficiency in a language that you may have had little or no previous exposure to. Please start language training as soon as you know that you will need it; you don't want to delay your thesis or have to change the topic or methodology just because your language skills are holding you back.

Please note: proficiency in another language is not a requirement for the PhD. It may be necessary, if your research requires communication in another language.

Thesis requirements

Overview

The PhD Thesis is the culmination of your research training. A PhD Thesis is expected to offer a skilled, nuanced, theoretically grounded, methodologically sound and comprehensive examination of the chosen topic that significantly contributes to the literature. The thesis is expected to adhere to standards of scholarly rigour and writing in the relevant field(s). The expected Thesis length is 250-300 pages.

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs specifies the requirements of the thesis as: “The doctoral dissertation must report, in an organized and scholarly fashion, the results of original research. The thesis must be a contribution to knowledge and demonstrate the candidate’s ability to undertake sustained research and to present his/her findings in an appropriate manner.”

These requirements can be fulfilled by very different kinds of theses. In the process of developing and writing your PhD Thesis, you will work closely with your supervisor and your committee to develop your own approach to research and writing. This is (probably) your first book-length research project, and it is (again, probably) the last research project that you will complete under the guidance of a committee. By completing your PhD, you demonstrate your ability to undertake major research projects without external supervision. Please review the Graduate Faculty guidelines on theses and supervision relationships: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/>

Finishing the research is great, but PhD Theses need to be properly formatted before they are circulated to the examiners for the defence. Please consult the Thesis Requirements Checklist: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/thesis-checklist/>

You must upload the pre-defence copy of the thesis via Carleton Central. The instructions for the Electronic Thesis Deposit are available here: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/electronic/>. In addition, you may be required to submit a hard copy of the thesis for a member(s) of the examination board. Please note that the Academic Integrity Statement, FIPPA and Carleton University Thesis License Agreement must to be submitted along with the thesis copy online: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/thesis-requirements/electronic-thesis-deposit/>

PhD Thesis Defence

Students are required to undertake an oral examination of their PhD thesis. The PhD Thesis committee consists of the supervisor, two committee members, and an “internal external” examiner (from a different department) and an external examiner (based at another university). The committee members’ role is to offer advice and guidance on the student’s research work, particularly on those aspects that fall outside the supervisor’s area of expertise. The committee members are at a minimum expected to approve the student’s proposal, read and comment on the thesis once it is completed in draft form, and be fully involved in the preparation of the examination copy of the thesis. The external examiners will normally only be identified once all committee members have approved the thesis.

The PhD Defence process (including preparations) is explained thoroughly here: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Thesis-Examination-Policy-revised-Jan-2022-1.pdf>. At the defence, the examiners and committee members will pose two rounds of questions. Thesis defences are technically examinations, but they should also be seen as great opportunities for the discussion and recognition of the student’s PhD research.

If you have any concerns about the defence, please contact your supervisor. Please consult the Thesis Examination Policy, Faculty of Graduate Studies for more information about the thesis defence. (link provided above).

Developing a Thesis Project, Finding a Research Supervisor

Most students will use the first year to both find an appropriate research project and to find a research supervisor (and committee members) who will guide them on the steps that will follow. The processes of defining a feasible research project and locating an appropriate supervisor who will help refining the project should be seen as connected.

Who can Supervise Doctoral Students?

Your supervisor will normally be a full-time faculty member in the Department of Law and Legal Studies. The supervision privileges are a question of faculty rank: all tenured assistant professors as well as associate professors and full professors can supervise PhD students. Assistant professors who are not yet tenured can co-supervise PhD students.

A complete list of all Department of Law and Legal Studies faculty members, including their areas of expertise, recent publications and contact information is available here: [_](#)

<http://www.carleton.ca/law/faculty-and-staff/department-faculty>

If a student chooses an adjunct research professor, a professor emeritus, or a faculty member within one year of retirement as the supervisor, they are required to have a co-supervisor (at least nominally). The full guideline is available here: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/graduate-supervision-appointments-policy/>

Finding a Research Supervisor

Finding a PhD supervisor is a crucial part of the process. Some students enter the program with a supervisor in mind, while others are in the process of prioritizing possible research areas and thesis topics. Please be assured that all faculty members in Law and Legal Studies feel collectively responsible for and committed to help you find the most appropriate supervisor for your project. This means that you can and should draw on these resources and be assured that we will support you on your journey. In addition, it is possible and it might be appropriate to change committee membership from the comprehensive exam stage to the PhD proposal and the thesis.

The following strategies can be helpful:

- 1. Be a good departmental citizen and be present.** You will meet faculty members through the courses you take during the coursework component of the program. This will expose you to faculty who may be potential supervisors for you. Departmental events such as lectures, colloquia, and workshops are great opportunities to meet other faculty members who might be potential supervisors as well. At these events, you will be able to hear about faculty members' current research, you will see how professors ask questions and engage with the speakers, and they will come to know you and your contributions.
- 2. Have a plan and a project.** In most cases, you should have identified an area of research for the PhD Thesis as well as a possible project and format for the comprehensive exam. If you have a short document (1-2 pages) that outlines your interests, questions, and possibly your method, it will be much easier for potential supervisors to see if they are the most suitable supervisor for your project if it is indeed clear what your project is about.
- 3. Ask around.** If you are unsure about possible supervisors, you can start by asking faculty members you already know for recommendations. We might know of connections between your interests and our colleague's interests and expertise. Faculty members are open to these kinds of conversations and will not take offence that they are not being approached as a potential supervisor. If in doubt, feel free to ask the Graduate Supervisor for recommendations.
- 4. Make connections, meet potential supervisors.** If you already have a few potential supervisors in mind when you start the program, you might want to make sure that you see them

in action either in classes you take or at research presentations you give. This allows you to see different approaches to research, and it allows potential supervisors to get to know you.

5. Ask politely, and know there's a range of responses between "yes" and "no." You should only ask a faculty member to be your research supervisor once you're really sure that you want to work with them. You have your reasons for asking them, so don't be shy about telling them why you think they would be the best supervisor for you and your project. Having matching approaches to research and supervision might turn out to be more important than the direct topic.

6. Listen to responses carefully. The response might not be an immediate "yes." Instead, you might be starting a conversation about what you're looking for in a supervisor and who would be the best match. Quite often, the response is "I think my colleagues B and C would actually be more appropriate supervisors for this project because their theoretical approach or methodology aligns much closer with your plans." If you don't think this is the case, tell them why. Or a faculty member might have taken on so many supervisions that they can't commit to another one.

7. Consult with the Graduate Program Supervisor. If you would like any advice or suggestions during this process, please consult the Graduate Supervisor. They have seen a lot of students going through the process of finding a supervisor, they know their colleagues, and they can help you find a research supervisor.

The PhD Supervisor-Student Working Relationship

The full university guidelines on graduate supervision are available here:

<https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/graduate-supervision-responsibilities-expectations-policy/>

The following list sums up the most important expectations and responsibilities.

The Supervisor

- Primary responsibility for supervision lies with the supervisor.
- The supervisor will help the student develop a realistic timeline for the completion of the project.
- The supervisor is expected to respond to and, when appropriate, approve the overall design of the Comprehensive Exam, Proposal and the Thesis.
- The supervisor is expected to read and comment on drafts of portions or chapters of the project and to return them to the student within a reasonable and previously announced period of time. The time between the submission of a draft at a previously agreed upon deadline and the supervisor's feedback time will normally be between one and two weeks

for short pieces of work, and can be up to four to six weeks for long drafts (multiple chapters or a complete thesis draft). The turnaround time depends on the supervisor's other commitments.

- The supervisor is responsible for coordinating the work of the committee. In consultation with the student, the supervisor might decide that the committee should meet in person, discuss drafts over email, or choose another method for assessing the work of the student. In case of diverging feedback from committee members, it is the supervisor's responsibility to communicate to the student how to interpret and respond to the comments.
- The supervisor will advise the student when the thesis is ready to be defended.
- The supervisor will mentor the student. This might include advice on funding applications, choosing conferences and giving presentations, preparing publications, research dissemination, deciding when and what to teach, and preparing for the job market.

The Student

- The student is responsible for identifying the area of research, questions, relevant literature, and methodology for the thesis.
- The student is responsible for choosing the committee members (in consultation with the supervisor) and communicating with them.
- The student is responsible for setting up a timeline for the project completion, have it approved by the supervisor, and meeting the deadlines contained in that document.
- The student is expected to maintain regular contact with their supervisor.
- The student should discuss the progress of research regularly with their supervisor, even when no written work is being handed in for revision.
- The student should expect and welcome comments and criticism.
- The student must allow readers sufficient time for making comments. Two to three weeks is a common and reasonable turnaround time for written work.
- The student is responsible for meeting **all** deadlines, including those set by the University.
- If the student has the impression that communication with committee members has broken down or expectations on the project diverge, they will consult their research supervisor. If the student has the impression that their work relationship with the research supervisor is overly strained, they will consult the Graduate Program Supervisor. (If the research supervisor is the Graduate Program Supervisor, the student will contact the Department Chair.)

Working with your PhD Supervisor

- Your research supervisor is your mentor, advisor, and advocate.
- It is very important that the student/supervisor relationship is understood as a professional relationship, and that this understanding is reflected in the communication throughout the research process.

- Please refer to the section on Establishing a Working Relationship with your Thesis/MRE Supervisor, for examples of appropriate communication about deadlines and agreements on p. 21-22.

ODDS AND ENDS

Working as a Contract Instructor

PhD students may be eligible to apply for employment as contract instructors for LAWS courses as part of their pedagogical training. However, to assist students in maintaining the momentum necessary to complete their doctoral studies, PhD candidates are not eligible for employment as contract instructors until after they have successfully defended their PhD proposal. As per the collective agreement, a contract instructor position cannot be held concurrently with a teaching assistant position.

Graduate Student Study Area

Graduate students are entitled to workspaces in the Graduate Study Room/Lounge, located in the LOEB Building, Room C460. This room is equipped with a few computers, wireless access, desks, fridge, microwave, etc. Keys for this room will be distributed by the Graduate Program Administrator in September. PhD students also receive keys to a separate work area. Upon completion or discontinuation of the program, please return all your Department keys.

E-mail and Written Correspondence

Each graduate student will be provided a mail slot located in the Graduate Study Room/Lounge. Mail is delivered once a day. If you cannot check your mailbox at least once a month, please notify the Graduate Program Administrator. As a registered student in the program, you must use your Carleton University e-mail account. You can forward your Carleton University email to another account, but you need to read the emails we send to your Carleton University email address. It is your responsibility to check both your mailbox and e-mail inbox regularly.

Payroll

If applicable, payments for RA/TA positions are set up for automatic deposit into your bank account. For information on payroll, please visit the Payroll Information section here: <https://carleton.ca/deputyprovost/faculty-affairs/teaching-assistants/>

If you are experiencing payroll issues, please contact Human Resources at: <https://carleton.ca/hr/>

Legal Database Access

Quicklaw

- One of the services available through the network is Quicklaw. This program offers a wide variety of commercial databases of legal materials, including judicial and administrative

decisions, statuses, periodical indexes, bibliographies, newspapers, etc. One needs an account and password in order to access these databases. For many of these databases, there is no fee. Some databases may include a fee, which are subject to change.

- How to Set-Up a Quicklaw Account: <https://library.carleton.ca/find/databases/lexis-advance-quicklaw>

Lexis-Nexis

- Lexis-Nexis is also available through the library. It provides core legal material from Canadian, United States and International jurisdictions, including materials such as the Canada Law Book and American Law Journals. This service is free of charge to graduate students in the MA and PhD Legal Studies Program at Carleton.
- Further Information on Lexis-Nexis:
<https://library.carleton.ca/find/databases/nexis-uni>

Computing Services

A variety of computer services are available to graduate students. Information Technology Services (ITS) maintains a PC network for both graduate and undergraduate students. Computers are networked and contain WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and other course-related applications.

To activate your Student Computing Account (SCA): <https://carleton.ca/its/help-centre/get-microsoft-office-for-students/>

For Wireless and Internet Information/Set-up: <https://carleton.ca/its/help-centre/wireless/>

Chet Mitchell Law Resource Centre

The Chet Mitchell Law Resource Centre is a reading and reference room for faculty and students. It provides select legal studies resources supplementing holdings found at the MacOdrum Library. Located in Room D580.

Jurisprudence Centre

The Jurisprudence Centre is a forum for discussion and research on legal studies. The Centre hosts seminars, guest speakers and visiting scholars throughout the year.

Student Organizations and Activities

Carleton University has a number of campus-wide graduate student organizations and activities. Please consult the links below for membership information, nomination forms, and email contact information for current Legal Studies representatives:

- Graduate Student's Association (GSA): <http://gsacarleton.ca/>
- GSA Council: <http://gsacarleton.ca/council/>

- Graduate Academic Caucus (GAC): <http://gsacarleton.ca/committees/>

The Carleton University Graduate Legal Studies Society (CUGLSS) objectives are:

“...to facilitate the participation of Legal Studies graduate students in the Law and Legal Studies Department and the University, and to encourage a scholarly dialogue and a sense of community among MA and PhD graduate students” (CUGLSS Constitution 2013). A number of student leadership positions are available on the CUGLSS core committee. Please join the graduate student list serve for more information: (email subscribe-legalstudiesgrads@lists.carleton.ca).

The Legal Studies graduate students also use Facebook to announce and organize events:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/575348319167426/>

Graduate students working as Teaching Assistants and Contract Instructors are represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 4600 (CUPE4600) More information on CUPE may be found on their website: <http://4600.cupe.ca/>

Student support services

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs offers a variety of workshops and services to support graduate students in their development of research and writing skills, teaching skills, career planning, and overall wellness. All services and workshops are advertised through the official graduate student newsletter, “TheGraduate@Carleton”:

<https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/newsletter/>

Students with disabilities have access to the Paul Menton Centre services that assist in making graduate studies accessible to students with disabilities, including short-term limitations arising from injuries or illnesses:

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

The International Student Services Office provides international students with access to mentoring, updated visa regulation information, opportunities to meet other international graduate students and other services that are specific to the needs of international students.

<http://www.carleton.ca/isso/>

Graduate students have access to the on-campus Health and Counselling Service clinic. The physicians and counsellors have experience in dealing with the situations that graduate students face and are there for you, whether you need the flu shot, help for dealing with stress, or have any other medical concerns. Their website is <http://www.carleton.ca/health/>, for appointments, please call (613) 520-6674 or book online at: <https://carleton.ca/health/book-an-appointment/>

Graduate students have access to the Carleton University Athletics Centre with its diverse offerings of athletic, dance, and yoga classes, workout facilities, recreational leagues, ice rinks and a pool: <http://athletics.carleton.ca/>

KEEPING IN TOUCH

The Department of Law and Legal Studies has an active social media presence on Instagram (@culegalstudies), Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/cuLegalStudies>), and X (formerly Twitter) (@cuLegalStudies). Please consider following the Department on one of these platforms to receive news and updates

Your key faculty contact is the Graduate Program Supervisor. If you experience academic problems dealing with issues that affect your academic performance, or have questions about working with your supervisor or committee, please contact the Graduate Program Supervisor.

Your key administrative contact is the Graduate Program Administrator. If you have any questions concerning administrative issues such as registration status, funding, thesis submission, graduation or otherwise, please contact the Graduate Program Administrator.

Emails with information and updates about the program will be sent to your Carleton University email account. Please ensure that you have a functional Carleton University email address and make sure to check it regularly. Also, if you are communicating through emails, you are required to email us from your Carleton University email account and include your student number so that we know that it is you that we are communicating with.

We appreciate you taking the time to review and consult this guide. It was put together to answer questions and to generally help you navigate our graduate programs.

Thank you very much!

Last update: MAY 2026

If you have suggestions for updates, please email: lawgrad@carleton.ca