

# Graduate Program Handbook

MA and PhD in Communication Programs  
School of Journalism and Communication  
Carleton University

2024-2025

## Table of Contents

Welcome from the Graduate Supervisor.....	5
Welcome from the CGC.....	6
Frequently Used Acronyms .....	7
Important Resources .....	7
Graduate Office & Desk Space.....	7
The Reader’s Digest Resource Centre.....	7
Faculty Mentor Program .....	8
Communication Graduate Caucus .....	8
Professional Development Sessions .....	8
Writing Bootcamp .....	8
Carleton Accounts .....	9
Trans* and Non-Binary Information .....	9
Keeping In Touch .....	9
Important Contacts and Websites.....	10
Academic Accommodations .....	11
Students with Disabilities .....	11
Survivors of Sexual Violence .....	11
Funding.....	12
External Awards.....	13
Donor-Funded Awards .....	13
Graduate Student Travel / Research Bursary.....	13
Communication Studies Graduate Student Research Support Funds.....	14
Master of Arts in Communication .....	15
Program Requirements .....	15
Academic Standing .....	15
MA Specializations .....	16
MA Overview – Coursework, Research Essay, or Thesis .....	19
Coursework option .....	19
MA Research Essay & Thesis options .....	19
MA Research Essay Requirements .....	20
MA Thesis Requirements .....	21
Important Milestones for MA Students.....	22
PhD in Communication.....	25
Program Requirements .....	25
PhD Comprehensive Examinations.....	25
The First Comprehensive Examination.....	25
The Second Comprehensive Examination.....	25
The Dissertation Proposal .....	26
Academic Standing .....	26
PhD Communication with Specialization in Political Economy.....	27
PhD Dissertation Requirements .....	27
PhD Thesis Examination Process .....	27
Important Milestones for PhD Students.....	29

Supervisor – Student relationship for all graduate students (MA and PhD) .....	31
Graduate Supervision – Overview .....	31
Responsibilities of Supervisors .....	31
Responsibilities of Students .....	32
What To Expect... .....	33
Finding a topic, finding a supervisor .....	34
Writing the Research Essay, MA Thesis, or PhD Dissertation .....	34
Student Registration Information .....	35
Change of Status from Full-Time to Part-Time .....	35
Loss of Status .....	36
Continuous Registration in Thesis, Dissertation, or Research Essay .....	36
Summer Registration.....	36
Leave of Absence .....	36
Exemption from Registration .....	37
Reinstatement .....	38
Degree completion for MA (MRE or thesis) and PhD.....	39
Electronic Thesis Deposit.....	39
Graduation.....	39
Appendix I .....	40
MA Thesis/MRE Advisory Committee Form .....	40
Appendix II.....	41
Ph.D. Dissertation Advisory Committee Form.....	41
Appendix III.....	43
MA Thesis Proposal Guidelines .....	43
Thesis guidelines.....	43
Thesis or Dissertation Cover page .....	44
License to Carleton University: .....	44
Appendix IV .....	45
PhD guidelines for comprehensive exams, proposal, and dissertation.....	45
The First Comprehensive Examination (COMS 6900) .....	45
The Second Comprehensive Examination (COMS 6901).....	45
The Dissertation Proposal (part of COMS 6909) .....	47
Dissertation guidelines .....	48

## Welcome from the Associate Director and Program Head

On behalf of the whole department, let me welcome you to the graduate programs in Communication & Media Studies. We are all so pleased that you've chosen to continue your educational journey with us. You've embarked on something exciting, and we're excited to learn alongside you over the next few years.

As you may know, communication and community are cognates. We pride ourselves on being one of the leading communication and media studies programs in the country; on the innovative research produced by our faculty and graduate students that tackles big questions in our field and tough problems in our world; on the outstanding teaching that happens in our courses; and on the impressive achievements of our alumni. But, more than that, we pride ourselves on being a department where people care for and support one another.

I hope that you'll help us continue that tradition: Take the time to get to know your cohort and peers, participate in our amazing Communication Graduate Caucus, join (or start) a reading group, sign up for a writing bootcamp, and take advantage of the many lectures, workshops and conferences held across campus all year.

For our part, all of us on the faculty and staff side of things are looking forward to getting to know you. We are invested in your success and want to help you meet your academic and professional goals. So, please reach out to your mentor, the grad supervisor and administrator, or to me if we can help.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Benjamin Woo, PhD (he/him/他)  
Associate Director, School of Journalism and Communication, and Program Head,  
Communication & Media Studies

## Welcome from the Graduate Supervisor

Welcome to our MA and PhD Communication programs! Some of you are just becoming a graduate student for the first time while others are moving from your MA to your PhD. Some of you have already completed a degree at Carleton while others will be exploring our campus for the first time. Regardless of where you are in your academic journey, we are very excited that you are joining us!

Our team of faculty members and staff—alongside your exceptional grad student peers already in the grad program—are keen to meet you. We hope you will enthusiastically dive into your new surroundings and take advantage of all the opportunities that become available to you.

Graduate school is usually a bit overwhelming at first, but we try our best to make it a stimulating and rewarding experience. This handbook is one small part of that work. Please read it carefully! In it you will find a road map, guidance, and some answers to common questions that will recur over the course of your time here. You will have other questions and issues that are not covered, and we encourage you to reach out so that you can get the answers and advice that you need.

As your Graduate Supervisor I am here to provide advice and support and work closely with Laura Gareau, our Graduate Administrator. Laura is absolutely indispensable to our graduate program to help with registration concerns and administrative processes, at the same time as she provides support for the Associate Director and Program Head. Your faculty mentor and your grad student colleagues in the Communication Graduate Caucus (CGC) are always happy to help.

I look forward to meeting you, so please do not hesitate to get in touch. Until then, welcome to the Communication studies program and to Carleton University!

*Sandra*

Sandra Robinson, PhD (she/her)  
Associate Professor & Graduate Supervisor  
4316 Richcraft Hall  
Communication Studies  
School of Journalism and Communication  
Carleton University

## Welcome from the CGC

On behalf of the Communication Graduate Caucus (CGC), we are thrilled to welcome you to our graduate program!! The CGC is a student-run council representing communication graduate students both within and outside of our department. As a communication graduate student, you are automatically a member of the CGC! Since 2006, the CGC has elected an executive council to liaise with the department on student-related matters, act as a link between our graduate students and both the Graduate Student Association (GSA) and Teaching Assistant/Contract Instructor union (CUPE 4600), assist with graduate student professional development sessions, and organize graduate student events.

The CGC organizes many events, including workshops, professional development opportunities, and social events throughout the year. Past events have included workshops on preparing for conferences and publications, crafting circles, picnics, reading groups, and more! We hope to host inclusive events, so if there is any way that we can accommodate you so that you can participate fully, do not hesitate to let us know.

One of the most notable events the CGC organizes is the annual conference. Now in its 20th year, this conference provides you with the opportunity to present research in a low-pressure, collegial environment, with a generous group of peers, faculty, and students from other universities. Previous keynote speakers for this event have included Dr. John Durham Peters (2006), Dr. Lisa Parks (2010), Dr. Jack Halberstam (2014), Dr. Kate Crawford (2015), Dr. Mia Consalvo (2016), Dr. David Nieborg (2021), Professor Eve Ng(2022), Dr. Faiza Hirji (2023), and Dr. Arseli Dokumaci (2024).

There are several ways to get involved with the CGC. Our elections are held twice per year: in April, the President, Vice-President, Social and Communications(s) Chairs and Conference Co-Chairs are appointed, and the remaining executive council seats are elected in September (including CUPE 4600 and GSA stewards, MA representatives, and a treasurer). If you are interested in participating in the CGC, keep an eye out for more information in early September. We'd love to have you!

Some ways to reach out to us: join our Discord Server: <https://discord.gg/bt9kwcft> (reach out by email for a new link if this one is inactive), or check out our website: <https://cgccarleton.ca/>.

Please also feel free to get in touch with us directly if you have any questions or concerns. We look forward to meeting all of you come September!

**Kate Ellis (they/them)**  
CGC President, 2024-2025  
[kateellis@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:kateellis@cmail.carleton.ca)

**Marzie Khalilian (she/her)**  
CGC Vice-President, 2024-2025  
[marziekhalilian@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:marziekhalilian@cmail.carleton.ca)

## Frequently Used Acronyms

SJC – School of Journalism & Communication  
FPGA – Faculty of Public & Global Affairs  
FGPA – Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs  
GSA – Graduate Student Association  
CGC – Communication Graduate Caucus  
SSHRC – Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council  
OGS – Ontario Graduate Scholarship  
CGS – Canada Graduate Scholarships – Masters Program  
CIHR – Canadian Institutes of Health Research  
ABD – all but defended  
GPA – Grade Point Average ETD – electronic thesis deposit  
WBC – Writing Boot Camp

## Important Resources

### Graduate Office & Desk Space

Secure, shared graduate desk space is available and is normally assigned in the fall. Please contact Laura, the Graduate Administrator, for keys and room information.

### The Reader's Digest Resource Centre

The Resource Centre is the hub of the School logistically and figuratively. It provides students, faculty, staff and researchers a collegial environment in which to browse, study, collaborate, research or just relax. The Centre is home to the history of the School. It houses program specific resources such as our book, journal and periodical collections, five daily newspapers, media directories and reference texts. The work of our graduates is preserved in a compilation of student theses and research projects (master's and honours) dating back to the early 1950s. We also display a collection of books published by current and past faculty members.

As part of the Centre's fabulous workspace, there are small conference rooms that can be reserved for studying/writing groups, meetings, research, etc. Conference rooms can be reserved by using the form available on Brightspace, under 'SJC Careers & Resources.'

For further information on resources, services and hours of operation go to our website at <https://carleton.ca/sjc/readers-digest-resource-centre/> or drop in and visit us on the fourth floor of Richcraft Hall, Room 4400. Kindly take a moment to introduce yourself to the Centre's Coordinator.

## Faculty Mentor Program

When graduate students are admitted to the program, each will be assigned a Faculty Mentor by the Graduate Supervisor. This information is usually shared in August, just prior to the start of the fall semester. The goal is to provide our new students with further assistance in their orientation and adaptation to graduate studies, in general, and our program, in particular. It gives the student a great opportunity to have contact with a faculty member whom they might not otherwise get to know and makes available a 'non-official' person to whom they can pose questions. Finally, it is also a means by which we can assist students in integrating into the intellectual culture of the program.

The Faculty Mentor is not the supervisor of your thesis or research paper and there is no expectation that they would be. Choosing your thesis or research paper supervisor is something you should do towards the end of your first year. Of course, your Faculty Mentor may be someone who you would like to be your supervisor. If so, this would need to be discussed specifically with them.

## Communication Graduate Caucus

The Communication Graduate Caucus (CGC) was formed in 2006 as a collective body of Masters and PhD students studying Communication at Carleton. All Communication graduate students are automatically members of the CGC. An executive council is elected every year to carry out the functions of the CGC. The CGC organizes an annual communication conference, facilitates student social events, and represents student interests to the Department as well as the Graduate Students Association. More information can be found at: [www.cgccarleton.ca](http://www.cgccarleton.ca)

## Professional Development Sessions

As part of your time here, the Graduate Supervisor will offer, in collaboration with other faculty members, a variety of opportunities for professional development. You will be notified by email in advance of all events, so keep an eye on your inbox!

In addition, the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs organizes many events of this nature: <https://carleton.ca/gradpd/>

## Writing Bootcamp

Writing Boot Camp (WBC) is an intensive workshop for graduate students designed to focus on the practice of academic writing. WBC will bring together a small group of committed graduate students in the communication studies program at Carleton University with two faculty facilitators over the course of two intense days of some discussion, reflection and goal setting, but primarily writing. We normally plan a fall and a spring WBC every year, open to all graduate students in the program, and with some rotation in faculty facilitation. (There are no limits on the number of WBC's that anyone can attend.)



The workshop will involve reflection sessions, discussions and intense writing units undertaken collectively. The primary purpose of WBC is for each participant to substantially advance a piece of academic writing upon which they are currently working.

## Carleton Accounts

If you are new to Carleton, the first thing you should do is activate your MyCarletonOne account through Carleton Central (<https://central.carleton.ca>). Activating your account grants you access to your official Carleton email account and to other IT services, including wireless networking and the ability to login to public lab computers. Your MyCarletonOne account also gives you access to a personal network drive where you can store your files. You can access this drive on public computers throughout campus and it is backed up daily. For a complete list of IT services on campus, lab locations, available software, etc., visit: <https://carleton.ca/its/all-services/>

Note: You cannot save files on public and departmental lab computer hard drives.

## Trans\* and Non-Binary Information

Carleton continues to work towards an inclusive campus and has a Trans and Non-Binary Inclusion Coordinator who works with community members, student, staff, and faculty, and consults with Carleton's Trans Advocacy Group. A [Trans Resource Hub](#) has been created to help trans\* and non-binary students, staff, and faculty navigate the university. You'll find a list of gender-neutral washrooms on campus, information about how to update your preferred name, and other important resources. We are in the process of working with the university to modify several bathrooms in Richcraft Hall to provide access to gender-neutral washrooms on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the building. You can find other bathroom locations [here](#).

## Keeping In Touch

Your key faculty contact is the Graduate Supervisor, Prof Sandra Robinson. Meetings may occasionally be convened to pass along information. As well, email is widely used to forward pertinent items to graduate students via your MyCarleton account. Ph.D. student progress is reviewed annually, and a letter indicating remaining requirements is sent to both the student and the supervisor. If desired, MA students can schedule a meeting with the Graduate Supervisor after the winter term to touch base regarding their progression through the program. Feel free to contact the Graduate Administrator, Laura Gareau, at any time for program and registration assistance.

## Important Contacts and Websites

- Laura Gareau  
Graduate Administrator & Administrative Assistant to the Program Head (COMS)  
Room 4302 B, Richcraft Hall (613) 520-2600 ext. 7405  
[Laura.Gareau@carleton.ca](mailto:Laura.Gareau@carleton.ca)  
Hours of operation: 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
- Prof. Benjamin Woo  
Program Head, School of Journalism & Communication, Room 4302 A, Richcraft Hall  
[Benjamin.Woo@carleton.ca](mailto:Benjamin.Woo@carleton.ca)
- Prof. Sandra Robinson (Graduate Supervisor)  
Supervisor of Graduate Programs in Communication Room 4316, Richcraft Hall  
[Sandra.Robinson@carleton.ca](mailto:Sandra.Robinson@carleton.ca)
- Prof. Liam Young (Undergraduate Supervisor)  
Supervisor of Undergraduate Studies Room 4317, Richcraft Hall  
[Liam.Young@carleton.ca](mailto:Liam.Young@carleton.ca)
- Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs  
Tory Building  
Registrar: Kevin McEwan  
[Kevin.McEwan@carleton.ca](mailto:Kevin.McEwan@carleton.ca)  
(613) 520-2525
- External/Internal Graduate Awards  
512 Tory Building  
(613) 520-2525  
Coordinator: Jenna McConnell  
[Jenna.McConnell@carleton.ca](mailto:Jenna.McConnell@carleton.ca)
- Graduate Forms and Policies <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/forms-policies/>
- Graduate Regulations <https://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/gradregulations/>
- Graduate Students' Association Room 600 University Centre (613) 520-6616  
<https://gsacarleton.ca/>
- Mental Health and Well Being <https://carleton.ca/sjc/communication/student-support-and-wellness-2/>

## Academic Accommodations

### Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations, or if you would like to talk to someone about your situation which may not require academic accommodations, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca).

### Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support/>

## Funding

**Only full-time students are eligible for funding.** Full-time students may receive funding in the following ways: teaching or research assistantships, departmental scholarships that include faculty nominated external and endowed awards, as well as FGPA (Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs) entrance scholarships.

At the MA level, teaching assistantships are renewable for four terms (over five consecutive terms). Departmental scholarships may be given for the first year and second year. FGPA scholarships vary; please check with FGPA for more information (links below).

At the PhD level, teaching assistantships are renewable for up to ten terms over five consecutive calendar years. Departmental scholarships are renewable for the first four years, but no scholarship is available in the fifth year. FGPA scholarships vary; please check with FGPA for more information.

Continuation of funding from year to year is dependent upon satisfactory academic performance (B- is the minimum permitted for a course credit).

Please pay attention to the important deadlines included with the funding offer, either initially or as a renewal.

### *Important:*

- Graduate students must be registered full-time to be eligible to receive payment for:
  - Departmental scholarships
  - FGPA scholarships
  - External scholarships (SSHRC, OGS, CGS)
  - External scholarships administered by FGPA
  - Teaching or Research Assistantships
  
- Students are not eligible to receive payments if they:
  - Withdraw completely from their graduate program
  - Change to part-time status
  - Are granted a leave of absence from their program

In the case of backdated withdrawals, students may have to refund scholarship payments already received.

## External Awards

Workshops hosted by FGPA and Communication Studies are offered in the late summer and/or fall for the following external awards.

OGS – Ontario Graduate Scholarship

SSHRC – Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

CIHR – Canadian Institutes of Health Research

Please note the deadline dates vary each academic year and are different for MA and PhD students and the submission process is different for OGS and SSHRC—the deadlines are in the Fall term. FGPA (Grad Studies) will update their External Awards page with new deadlines once they are available. See here: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/awards-and-funding/external-awards/>.

Other external awards are also available, such as the Women’s Health Scholars Award. These awards are provided by an organization, agency or council outside of Carleton and require a separate application — often 1 full year before the award begins. More information can be found here: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/awards-and-funding/external-awards/>

Students should also consult the Graduate Students’ Association (GSA) for grants and awards, such as the International Student Award, Student-Parent Award, Indigenous Student Award, and others. More information can be found here: <https://gsacarleton.ca/>

## Donor-Funded Awards

Donor-funded awards are financial awards and are provided by an individual or organization to Carleton. They are administered by Carleton with deadlines in either the fall or winter and are awarded based on academic merit, financial need and/or specific research areas. More information on these awards can be found here: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/awards-and-funding/internal-awards/>

## Graduate Student Travel / Research Bursary

FGPA (Graduate Studies) and FGA (the Faculty of Public and Global Affairs) provide modest funds to students who require assistance to conduct or present their research. The fund may cover a portion of the cost related to attend a scholarly conference at which the graduate student is presenting a paper. Students are restricted to one application and one conference per academic year (May-April). However, if funds are available, a second application may be considered within the same academic year. Approval is dependent on the availability of funds and is considered on a case-by-case and first come, first served basis. Students should speak with their supervisor for details (supervisors will need to provide a letter for the student application recommending funding for travel). Students in an extension term or on leave or part-time, are not eligible for this funding.

Please note that the application form for the FGPA (Grad Studies) funding is an old form that Grad Studies hopes to alter to make it more clear. Do not be dissuaded from applying based on the automatic calculation that occurs after you fill in your amounts; it is not including all of your other expenses.

Information on application requirements can be found here:

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

→ Please apply online through Carleton Central. Look under “Awards & Financial Assistance”. Then, select “Graduate Online Application Forms”.

The Graduate Students’ Association (GSA) also offers some grants that can help students with travel. More information can be found here: <https://gsacarleton.ca/>

## Communication Studies Graduate Student Research Support Funds

Our program also offers internal support funds. Students should check the Resources for Graduate Students website for more information about funding, which may differ from year to year: <https://carleton.ca/sjc/communication/graduate-studies-2/resources-graduate-students/>

# Master of Arts in Communication

## Program Requirements

Masters students must successfully complete the equivalent of 5.0 credits. This can be done by choosing a coursework option, or a research essay, or a thesis. All MA students are admitted into the thesis program as a default. If a student decides to follow the research essay or coursework program, they should contact the graduate administrator to make sure the change in their program is added. This is issued automatically upon request. The specific requirements for the MA are as follows:

Required for all students:

COMS 5101 Foundations of Communication Studies (1.0 credit, Fall and Winter terms)

COMS 5605 Approaches to Communication Research (0.5 credit)

Then, one of these pathways:

- Coursework option: 3.5 credits chosen from the list of optional courses noted below
- Research Essay option: (1.0 credit) and 2.5 credits chosen from the list of optional courses;
- MA thesis option (2.0 credits): and 1.5 credits from the list of optional courses below,

### Optional Courses

COMS 5102, 5200, 5202, 5203, 5205, 5206, 5207, 5208, 5209, 5212, 5214, 5218, 5219, 5220, 5221, 5222, 5223, 5224, 5225, 5509, 5808

- Note: Students may take one optional course (0.5 credit) outside the program, with permission of the graduate supervisor.
- NOTE: In very exceptional circumstances, students in the M.A. program are permitted to take one directed studies course with permission of the graduate supervisor, COMS 5808 (0.5 credit).

Course descriptions can be found here:

<https://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/gradprograms/communication/#courseinventory>

## Academic Standing

A standing of B- or better must be obtained in each credit counted towards the master's degree.

## MA Specializations

NOTE: *Please consult with the Graduate Supervisor and see the Graduate Administrator to add a specialization to your program.*

Course descriptions can be found here:

<https://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/gradprograms/communication/#courseinventory>

### *MA Communication with Specialization in African Studies*

Course descriptions can be found [here](#).

#### Research Essay option (5.0 credits)

- 0.5 credit in AFRI 5000 African Studies as a Discipline: Historical and Current Perspectives
- credit in AFRI 5800 [0.0] Scholarly Preparation in African Studies
- 1.0 credit in COMS 5101 Foundations of Communication Studies
- 0.5 credit in COMS 5605 Approaches to Communication Research
- 1.0 credit in COMS 5908 Research Essay
- 2.0 credits from the list of optional COMS courses (see [here](#))

#### Thesis option [5.0 credits]

- 0.5 credit in AFRI 5000 African Studies as a Discipline: Historical and Current Perspectives
- credit in AFRI 5800 [0.0] Scholarly Preparation in African Studies
- 1.0 credit in COMS 5101 Foundations of Communication Studies
- 0.5 credit in COMS 5605 Approaches to Communication Research
- 2.0 credits in COMS 5909 MA Thesis
- 1.0 credit from the list of optional COMS courses (see [here](#))

### *MA Communication with Collaborative Specialization in Latin American and Caribbean Studies*

Course descriptions can be found [here](#).

#### Research Essay Option [5.0 credits]

- 0.5 credit in LACS 5000 Interdisciplinary Approaches to Latin American and Caribbean Studies
- credit in LACS 5800 [0.0] Scholarly Preparation in Latin American and Caribbean Studies
- 1.0 credit in COMS 5101 Foundations of Communication Studies
- 0.5 credit in COMS 5605 Approaches to Communication Research
- 1.0 credit In COMS 5908 Research Essay
- 2.0 credits from the list of optional COMS courses (including 1.0 credits with sufficient Latin American and Caribbean Studies Content) (see [here](#))



### Thesis Option [5.0 credits]

- 0.5 credit in LACS 5000 Interdisciplinary Approaches to Latin American and Caribbean Studies
- credit in LACS 5800 Scholarly Preparation in Latin American and Caribbean Studies
- 1.0 credit in COMS 5101 Foundations of Communication Studies
- 0.5 credit in COMS 5605 Approaches to Communication Research
- 2.0 credit in COMS 5909 M.A. Thesis
- 1.0 credits from the list of optional COMS courses (1.0 credits with sufficient Latin American and Caribbean Studies Content) (see [here](#))

### *MA Communication with Collaborative Specialization in Climate Change*

Course descriptions can be found [here](#).

### Research Essay option (5.0 credits)

- 1.0 credit in CLIM 5000 Climate Collaboration
- credit in CLIM 5800 Climate Seminar Series
- 1.0 credit in COMS 5101 Foundations of Communication Studies
- 0.5 credit in COMS 5605 Approaches to Communication Research
- 1.0 credit in COMS 5908 Research Essay
- 1.5 credits from the list of optional COMS courses (see [here](#))

### Thesis option [5.0 credits]

- 1.0 credit in CLIM 5000 Climate Collaboration
- credit in CLIM 5800 Climate Seminar Series
- 1.0 credit in COMS 5101 Foundations of Communication Studies
- 0.5 credit in COMS 5605 Approaches to Communication Research
- 2.0 credits in COMS 5909 MA Thesis
- 0.5 credit from the list of optional COMS courses (see [here](#))

### *MA Communication with Specialization in Data Science*

Course descriptions can be found [here](#).

### Coursework Option [5.0 credits]

- 0.5 credit in DATA 5000 Data Science Seminar
- 1.0 credit in COMS 5101 Foundations of Communication Studies
- 0.5 credit in COMS 5605 Approaches to Communication Research
- 0.5 credit in COMS 5225 [0.5] Critical Data Studies
- 0.5 credit from: COMS 5203 [0.5] Communication, Technology, Society, COMS 5221 Science and the Making of Knowledge, COMS 5224 [0.5] Internet, Infrastructure,

#### Materialities

- 2.0 credits from the list of optional COMS courses (see [here](#))

#### Research Essay Option [5.0 credits]

- 0.5 credit in DATA 5000 Data Science Seminar
- credit in COMS 5101 Foundations of Communication Studies
- 0.5 credit in COMS 5605 Approaches to Communication Research
- 0.5 credit in COMS 5225 Critical Data Studies
- credit in COMS 5908 Research Essay
- 1.5 credits from the list of optional COMS courses (see [here](#))

#### Thesis Option [5.0 credits]

- 0.5 credit DATA 5000 Data Science Seminar
- credit in COMS 5101 Foundations of Communication Studies
- 0.5 credit in COMS 5605 Approaches to Communication Research
- 0.5 credit in COMS 5225 Critical Data Studies
- 2.0 credits in COMS 5909 MA Thesis
- 0.5 credit from the list of optional COMS courses (see [here](#))

## MA Overview – Coursework, Research Essay, or Thesis

There are three routes to the MA Communication degree: coursework, research essay (MRE), or thesis.

### Coursework option

The **coursework option** is very popular with students and maximizes your contact with a wide range of faculty members and communication studies topics. This option is as substantive as the MRE or thesis. When you elect a course-based MA degree, you will write a number of papers and work on a number of projects within the context of your core foundations and elective courses. You do not require a supervisor if you pursue this option. The coursework option does not preclude you from pursuing a PhD in the future. Students pursuing this course-based option rarely require timeline extensions.

### MA Research Essay & Thesis options

The key difference between the **research essay** and the **thesis** is 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, whereas the thesis option presents more opportunities for guided research on a larger project. In some circumstances, students require longer to complete these two options.

The following table presents an overview of the two options. The choice between the two routes depends on many factors, and you should consult with your supervisor or the Graduate Supervisor of Communication.

	Research Essay	Thesis
Credits	1.0 (equivalent to two graduate courses)	2.0 (equivalent to four graduate courses)
Length (pages)	50 – 60	90 – 110
Duration of the Research Essay/Thesis project	Depends on project and commitment, on average: four to eight months of fulltime work	Depends on project and commitment, on average: eight months of fulltime research and writing
Supervision & Committee membership	Supervisor, second reader (will mostly be involved in the evaluation of the essay)	Supervisor and a committee member involved in research process

	<b>Research Essay</b>	<b>Thesis</b>
Supervision Process	Regular consultations with supervisor.	Regular consultations with supervisor and other committee members (as appropriate).
Expectations	Should represent a strong understanding and original interpretation of the field(s) studied.	Should represent a distinct and original contribution to the field, based on primary Research.
Evaluation	Mark assigned by supervisor and second reader (letter grades).	Thesis is defended & discussed with the committee; mark (pass, distinction, or fail) assigned by committee.
Benefits you can derive	A research project that may be converted into a publishable article.	A substantive and complex research project. A summary of parts of the project may be converted into a publishable article
This option is very suitable if you	Have a wide range of interests you want to develop during course work. Hope to proceed to a PhD program where you will pursue a more substantive research project. Are a part-time student and want to pursue projects that don't overwhelm your schedule	Are drawn to a particular project you want to pursue in depth Want to hone your methodological skills in a larger project. Want to use the Thesis as a preparation or testing ground for PhD studies. Want to use the Thesis as a 'capstone' before switching to a line of work that doesn't involve larger projects

## MA Research Essay Requirements

The MA research essay should have a minimum of 50-60 pages.

Once the MRE is graded and returned to the student, any outstanding corrections outlined by the supervisor and second reader must be made. It is the student's responsibility to have one unbound copy of the MRE (including title page and license) delivered to the department. There is a template for MRE title page and License to Carleton University – See Appendix I, page 43-44.

The established timeline is to deposit (submit) the completed MRE with the Graduate Administrator by April 30. The MRE will be forwarded to the MacOdrum Library.

## MA Thesis Requirements

The MA thesis should have a minimum of 90-110 pages. Guidelines for the preparation of graduate theses and information on the procedures for examination of graduate theses are available here:

<http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/>

See here for a thesis template: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/thesis-requirements/thesis-forms-templates-policies/>

### *MA Thesis Examination Process*

#### Pre-Defence

- Please note you should plan your thesis defence date according to the two-week wait period required by FGPA from the time the notice is sent to FGPA and when the defence can take place. For example, if your thesis is uploaded on Friday, January 10 the earliest you could defend your thesis is Friday, January 24. Please plan accordingly.
- The student and supervisor advise the Graduate Administrator that a thesis examination is being planned.
- The supervisor and the second reader confirm via e-mail with the Graduate Supervisor that the thesis is ready to defend.
- The student's supervisor coordinates a board comprised of the supervisor, the second reader, external examiner (i.e. outside our department) and Chair.
- The Graduate Administrator is notified of the date, time and board composition and authorizes the upload of the thesis examination copy.
- The student logs into Carleton Central to complete licenses and agreements, including the Academic Integrity Statement; fills in thesis details including title and abstract; uploads examination copy of the thesis.
- The thesis supervisor logs into Carleton Central to review the uploaded content, and completes the 'Thesis Supervision Defence Authorization Form'.
- The Communication Director (Program head, Director or Associate Director of the School) consults the examination committee to determine whether the defence should proceed. If the committee raises objections, the Communication Director meets with the student to determine whether the student wishes to proceed. The Communication Director completes the 'Departmental Chair – Defence Authorization Form' on Carleton Central.
- Student provides hard copies of the thesis for the thesis examination committee, depending on their preference. The Graduate Administrator will distribute copies.
- A thesis examination notice is posted in the department and distributed to members of the examination board.

#### *Defence*

- The defence takes place on the appointed day. Information about the procedures during the defence can be found here, under '1.5 The Examination':

<https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Thesis-Examination-Policy- Revised-February-2016.pdf>.

- The defence is graded:
  - Accepted as is (in which case you proceed to the instructions for electronic deposit);
  - Accepted with minor revisions (in which case you make those revisions, they are approved by your supervisor, and then you deposit electronically);
  - Accepted with major revisions (in which case the entire defence committee must approve the revisions and once they do, you proceed to electronic deposit); or
  - Fail (don't worry about this one!). More information about this and the other outcomes can be found here, under '1.6 Examination Outcome' at the link above.
- The Chair of the defence completes the "Exam Report Outcome Form" in Carleton Central. The Chair submits the paper exam report to the Graduate Administrator. The student and the supervisor can review the exam report in Carleton Central.

### **Post-Defence**

- The student completes revisions, if any, and has the revised copy of the thesis approved by the supervisor. The student will upload the approved final thesis in PDF/A format and click on "Finalize Submission". Instructions on how to convert the document to PDF/A format is available here: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/thesis-requirements/thesis-forms-templates-policies/>
- The complete electronic thesis deposit (ETD) procedure can be found here: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/electronic/>

### **Approvals:**

- Once the electronic thesis has been uploaded, the supervisor will be notified to approve the final copy of the uploaded thesis. If more revisions are required, the student will be notified by email and required to upload the revised copy.
- Once approved by the supervisor, the thesis will be sent to FGPA for final approval. Once approved by FGPA, the student will receive an email. FGPA will send a copy of the thesis to MacOdrum Library. The thesis will then be added to the ProQuest database and be publicly available. Once you have graduated, FGPA will send your thesis to the National Library and Archives.

Please note: A thesis deposit cannot be considered complete until it is authorized by your thesis supervisor. It is best to keep in contact with your supervisor to ensure they have sufficient time to review and approve your uploaded copy in order to meet the thesis deposit deadlines for registration and Convocation.

## **Important Milestones for MA Students**

Normal progress and deadlines over the course of a full time MA. If you have added a specialization, please adapt the below course requirements accordingly.

Note: Students are responsible for knowing and following regulations in the Carleton [Graduate Calendar](#).

MA	Coursework	Research Essay	Thesis
<b>Year 1</b>			
Fall term	COMS 5101, 5605 and one optional COMS 5xxx course	COMS 5101, 5605 and one optional COMS 5xxx course	COMS 5101, 5605 and one optional COMS 5xxx course
Winter term	Continue coursework. Advise Grad Supervisor & Grad Administrator of your program choice.	Continue with coursework. Arrange formal meeting with a supervisor about proposed research. Complete the MA Supervisor Authorization form and submit to the Grad Administrator.	Continue with coursework: COMS 5101, and two other courses. Arrange formal meeting with a supervisor about proposed research. Complete the MA Supervisor Authorization form and submit to the Grad Administrator.
Summer term	Make an appointment to meet with the Grad Supervisor to review 1 <sup>st</sup> year (if desired).	Make an appointment to meet with your supervisor to review 1 <sup>st</sup> year.	Make an appointment to meet with your supervisor to review 1 <sup>st</sup> year.
<b>Year 2</b>			
Fall term	Continue coursework.	Complete coursework and register for COMS 5908 (MRP). Second formal meeting with supervisor, submit research essay outline.	Register for COMS 5909 (thesis). Second formal meeting with supervisor, submit thesis proposal.
January	Continue coursework.	Third formal meeting with supervisor. Full draft of research essay for review recommended.	Third formal meeting with supervisor. Full draft of thesis for review recommended.
Feb-March		Meetings with supervisor for revisions. Deadline to submit is last day of classes.	Meetings with supervisor for revisions and thesis examination date.

April	Apply to graduate by April 1 <sup>st</sup> .	Apply to graduate by April 1 <sup>st</sup> . Deadline to submit two copies is last day of classes. Contact the Grad Administrator for details.	Apply to graduate by April 1 <sup>st</sup> . Complete Academic Integrity Statement and complete license forms. Upload thesis exam copy and prepare for defence. Contact the Grad Administrator for more details.
April- early May			Thesis Defence
Mid-May Contact Graduate Administrator for exact date			Last date to submit electronic thesis copy for deposit and June convocation.
June	Convocation	Convocation	Convocation
August/Summer	*End of time for program completion see Grad Administrator. Apply for an extension if necessary.	*End of time for program completion see Grad Administrator. Apply for an extension if necessary.	*End of time for program completion see Grad Administrator. Apply for an extension if necessary.
September (for MA students who have extended work into the Summer term)	Apply to graduate by September 1 <sup>st</sup> .	Apply to graduate by September 1 <sup>st</sup> .	Apply to graduate by September 1 <sup>st</sup> .



# PhD in Communication

## Program Requirements

Doctoral candidates must successfully complete the equivalent of 5.0 credits. The specific requirements are listed in these four stages:

1. COMS 6000 Doctoral Seminar in Communication Studies (1.0 credit)
2. Two [2.0] additional credits from the list of optional courses below:  
COMS 5102, 5200, 5202, 5203, 5205, 5206, 5207, 5208, 5209, 5212, 5214, 5218, 5219, 5220, 5221, 5222, 5223, 5224, 5225, 5509, 5605, 6001, 6005, 6006, 6007, 6010  
JOUR 5401  
Note: Up to 0.5 credit may be taken in a relevant discipline outside of the School, with permission of the Graduate Supervisor; students in the Ph.D. program are restricted to one (0.5 credit) directed studies course (COMS 6010).
3. 2.0 credits in:  
COMS 6900 [1.0] Comprehensive Examination I  
COMS 6901 [1.0] Comprehensive Examination II
4. COMS 6909 [0.0] PhD Thesis

Course descriptions can be found here:

<https://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/gradprograms/communication/#courseinventory>

## PhD Comprehensive Examinations

In addition to their course requirements, doctoral candidates are required to write two comprehensive examinations each worth 1.0 credit.

### The First Comprehensive Examination

The first comprehensive examination (COMS 6900) is closely related to the course materials in the doctoral seminar (COMS 6000) and is conducted by the instructors of COMS 6000. To be eligible for the first comprehensive examination candidates must have a GPA of 10.0 or higher on their previous course work, including COMS 6000. The first comprehensive (COMS 6900) is normally held in late April or early May shortly after completing the doctoral seminar (COMS 6000), and tests the student's mastery of the theoretical, methodological and substantive issues of the field as a whole. Students complete a written and oral examination. Questions are determined and graded by the instructors of COMS 6000. Students who fail the examination will normally be asked to withdraw from the program. (See Appendix IV)

### The Second Comprehensive Examination

The Second Comprehensive Examination is a literature review that will likely contribute to the

student's dissertation project. It requires students to work independently and in consultation with a supervisor and committee to gain expertise on a specific topic, problem or sub-field in which they could research, publish or teach. Each PhD student will work with their supervisor and their committee members to compile an individualized bibliography/reading list including 25 books or a combination of books and articles where five (5) academic articles constitute one book. The paper should be approximately 10,000-12,000 words long (30-40 pages). The Second Comprehensive Examination Literature Review will be defended by the student in a meeting with their committee on an assigned date. (See Appendix IV)

N.B. Students may, if they desire, adjust the membership of their committee, including their supervisor, upon completion of the Second Comprehensive examination, or later in exceptional cases. In the event of any difficulties with their committee, students should feel free to confer with the Graduate Supervisor for assistance or advice.

## The Dissertation Proposal

- All candidates for the Ph.D. degree must prepare and present a formal dissertation proposal before beginning the substantive work on their dissertation.
- A dissertation proposal is submitted after the second comprehensive requirement has been satisfied and defended at an oral presentation. Students should register for their dissertation only when they are ready to write their proposal.
- The proposal is typically 10,000 to 12,000 words in length (40-50 pages) and should include a concise literature review; a clear explanation of the main question or problem to be addressed and how it relates to research in the field; a discussion of the theoretical approach from which the question or problem will be explored; a description of the methodology and main source materials to be used in the research; and a proposed timeframe for completion. Please see the attached guidelines in Appendix IV of this handbook.
- The student and supervisor should constitute a committee to evaluate the proposal. Except in extremely rare circumstances, this committee will be the student's thesis committee.
- The student should prepare an outline of his or her proposal with a bibliography for discussion with and feedback from the full committee (in an in person meeting constituted for this purpose) prior to submitting the proposal for defence. This is the proposal preparation meeting. Don't forget or plan to skip this step!
- Full-time students should normally present their proposal before the end of their third year. Part-time students should normally present their proposal during their fifth year in the program and must do so by the end of the fall term of their sixth year at the latest.

## Academic Standing

A standing of B- or better must be obtained in each course counted towards the Ph.D. degree. Students are advised to consult the General Regulations section of the Graduate Calendar for details of regulations governing graduate programs.

## PhD Communication with Specialization in Political Economy

\*Please consult with the Graduate Supervisor and see the Graduate Administrator to add this to your program. This specialization is also 5.0 credits.

1. 1.0 credit in:  
COMS 6000 [1.0] Doctoral Seminar in Communication Studies
2. 1.0 additional credits from the list of optional courses, see link below.
3. 2.0 credits in:  
COMS 6900 [1.0] Comprehensive Examination I  
COMS 6901 [1.0] Comprehensive Examination II
4. 0.5 credit in:  
PECO 6000 [0.5] Political Economy: Core Concepts
5. 0.5 credit in:  
A relevant political economy course
6. 0.0 credits in:  
COMS 6909 [0.0] PhD Thesis

Course descriptions can be found here:

<https://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/gradprograms/communication/-courseinventory>

## PhD Dissertation Requirements

The Ph.D. Dissertation is typically between 200-300 pages. Guidelines for the preparation of graduate theses and information on the procedures for examination are available at <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/>.

For important milestones in this process, please see the section below.

## PhD Thesis Examination Process

### *Pre-Defence*

Please note: You should plan your thesis defence date according to the six week period required by FGPA from the time the notice is sent to FGPA and when the defence can take place. For example, if your thesis examination copy is uploaded on Friday, January 3 the earliest you could defend your thesis is Friday, February 14. Please plan accordingly.

### *Examination preparation and process:*

- The student and supervisor advise the Graduate Administrator that a thesis examination is being planned.
- All members of the student's advisory committee, must submit an email to the Communication Studies program Program Head (Director or Associate Director of the School) confirming their approval that the thesis is ready to be defended. In planning the timeline for completion, the student and supervisor should provide advisory committee members with a minimum of 3-6 weeks to review the thesis prior to this approval.

- The Communication Director coordinates a board comprised of the supervisor and the student's dissertation committee, an internal examiner from within Carleton but outside the School, and an external examiner who must be at arm's length (i.e. no recent collaboration, etc.), and from outside the university. Under no circumstances should the student contact either the internal or external examiners directly. More details can be found under section '2.2 Constitution of the Examination Board': <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Thesis-Examination-Policy-Revised-February-2016.pdf>
- The Graduate Administrator is notified of the date, time and board composition and authorizes the upload of the thesis examination copy.
- The student logs into Carleton Central to complete licenses and agreements, including the "Academic Integrity Statement"; fills in thesis details including title and abstract; uploads examination copy of the thesis.
- The thesis supervisor logs into Carleton Central to review the uploaded content and completes the "Thesis Supervision Defence Authorization Form".
- The Communication Director consults the committee, excluding the external examiner, to determine whether the defence should proceed. If the committee raises objections, the Communication Director needs to meet with the student to determine whether the student wishes to proceed anyway. The Communication Director must also confirm there is no conflict of interest. All of this discussion must take place before the Communication Director completes the "Departmental Chair – Defence Authorization Form" in Carleton Central.
- The student must provide to the Graduate Administrator one hard copy of the dissertation for FGPA. The student provides hard copies of the dissertation to the examination committee, depending on their preference. The Graduate Administrator will distribute these copies.
- The Dean of FGPA signs the examination notice, assigns the Chair of the defence, contacts the external examiner providing him/her with the hard copy of the dissertation, and reviews the external examiner's report once submitted.
- The Dean completes the "External Examiner's Report Approval Form" and this triggers an email to the Communication Director, the Graduate Administrator and the Chair of the defence notifying them the defence will proceed.
- A thesis examination notice is posted in the department and distributed to members of the examination board.

### *Defence*

The defence takes place on the appointed day. Information about the procedures during the defence can be found here, under '2.5 The Examination': <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Thesis-Examination-Policy-Revised-February-2016.pdf>.

The defence and is graded:

- Accepted as is (in which case you proceed to the instructions for electronic deposit);
- Accepted with minor revisions (in which case you make those revisions, they are approved

by your supervisor, and then you deposit electronically);

- Accepted with major revisions (in which case a subset of the defence committee must approve the revisions and once they do, you proceed to electronic deposit); or
- Fail (don't worry about this one!). More information about this and the other outcomes can be found here, under '2.6 Examination Outcome': <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Thesis-Examination-Policy.pdf>
- The Chair of the defence completes the "Exam Report Outcome Form" in Carleton Central. The Chair submits the paper Exam report to the Graduate Administrator. The student and the supervisor can review the exam report in Carleton Central.

### *Post-Defence*

- The student completes revisions, if any, and has the revised copy of the thesis approved by the supervisor. The student will upload the approved final thesis in PDF/A format and click on "Finalize Submission". Instructions on how to convert your document to PDF/A format are available here: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/pdfa-formatting/>
- The complete electronic thesis deposit (ETD) procedure can be found here: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/electronic/>

### *Approvals*

- Once the electronic thesis has been uploaded, the supervisor will be notified to approve the final copy of the uploaded thesis and complete the "Thesis Supervisor Final Copy Approval Form" in Carleton Central. If more revisions are required, the student will be notified by email and required to upload the revised copy.
- Once approved by the supervisor, the thesis will be sent to FGPA for final approval. Once approved by FGPA, you will receive an email. FGPA will send a copy of your dissertation to MacOdrum Library. Your dissertation will then be added to the ProQuest database and be publicly available.

Please note: A thesis deposit cannot be considered complete until it is authorized by your thesis supervisor. It is best to keep in contact with your supervisor to ensure he/she has sufficient time to review and approve your uploaded copy in order to meet the thesis deposit deadlines for registration and Convocation. Once you have graduated, FGPA will send your thesis to the National Library and Archives.

## Important Milestones for PhD Students

Normal progress and deadlines over the course of a full time PhD. If you have added a specialization, please adapt the below course requirements accordingly. These are general milestones that do not reflect firm dates you should set with your supervisor and committee.

Note: Students are responsible for knowing and following regulations in the Carleton Graduate Calendar.

<b>PhD</b>	
<b>Year 1</b>	
Fall term	COMS 6000 and two additional COMS courses
Winter term	COMS 6000 and two additional COMS courses. Prepare for 1 <sup>st</sup> Comprehensive examination.
April-May	Complete 1 <sup>st</sup> Comprehensive Examination—COMS 6900 Between this time and the end of the summer term, select a supervisor and complete the PhD Supervisor authorization form.
Summer term	Student progress conducted by reviewing audit of program. Begin work on Second Comprehensive Examination - COMS 6901. Submit a bibliography of pertinent literature with 1-2 page explanation outlining the subject area to be addressed in the literature review.
<b>Year 2</b>	
Fall term	Arrange meeting with supervisor and committee members to approve/give feedback on the bibliography.
Winter term	Student should turn in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Comprehensive Exam to their committee in January and defend it to their committee on an assigned date. Work on dissertation proposal.
Summer term	Student progress conducted by reviewing audit of program. Register in thesis – COMS 6909. Must maintain continuous registration in thesis until completion. Work on dissertation proposal.
<b>Year 3</b>	
Fall term	Work on Dissertation Proposal.
Winter term	Defend Dissertation Proposal. Continue to have meetings with supervisor and committee members.
Summer term	Student progress conducted by reviewing audit of program. Work on thesis. Continue to have meetings with supervisor and committee members.
<b>Year 4</b>	
Fall term	Continue to meet with supervisor and committee members. Work on dissertation.
Winter term	Continue to meet with supervisor and committee members. Work on dissertation.
Summer term	Student progress conducted by reviewing audit of program. Work on thesis. Continue to have meetings with supervisor and committee members. Review FGPA policy on applying for extensions.
<b>Year 5</b>	
Fall term	Work on dissertation. Continue to have meetings with supervisor and committee members.
Winter term	Six weeks' notice required between receiving thesis copies and the actual defence. Plan accordingly with your supervisor and committee members.

April – Early May	Apply to graduate by April 1 <sup>st</sup> . PhD Thesis Examination
June	Convocation
Summer term	Apply to graduate by September 1 <sup>st</sup> . *End of time for program completion. See Graduate Administrator if you require an extension to complete the thesis.

Important notice: The PhD program is five to six years in length. Extensions may be permitted but require the support of your supervisor, committee members, the Graduate Committee, and FGPA. For more information, see Section 13.5: ‘Extension of Time Limit’ here: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/program-extension-policy-and-procedures/>

## Supervisor – Student relationship for all graduate students (MA and PhD)

### Graduate Supervision – Overview

Fundamental to a satisfactory relationship between a supervisor and a student are mutual respect and a high level of professional integrity.

When a supervisor-student relationship is established, the parties should understand that they assume the following responsibilities and can have the following expectations:

### Responsibilities of Supervisors

- To be familiar with the regulations and standards of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, and the department, especially as they pertain to the conduct of research and the production of the thesis, and to ensure that the student is aware of these regulations and standards.
- To be aware of and abide by the university’s policies on conflict of interest, sexual harassment, and research ethics.
- To assist the student in identifying a suitable research topic and (where appropriate) setting up a program of study.
- To assist the student in the interpretation of research materials.
- To be available for regular and timely consultations with students and to provide notification of lengthy absences and the support mechanisms available under these circumstances.
- To convene meetings of the advisory committee as agreed with the student.
- To agree to continue supervision when on sabbatical or other type of leave, or to assist the student in making arrangements for supervision during the period of the leave.
- To assist students in seeking financial support, especially in writing letters of good quality in support of scholarship and fellowship applications (e.g. well- written, informative, typed, on university letterhead), and to inform a student if a supportive letter cannot be written.
- To agree with the student on a reasonable schedule for the completion of each portion of

the research and thesis.

- To read in a timely fashion portions of the thesis or research essay submitted by the student.
- To provide constructive suggestions especially vis-à-vis difficulties or deficiencies perceived in the draft.
- To indicate clearly when a draft thesis is in acceptable condition for examination or, if it is clear that the thesis will not be examinable, to advise the student in a timely fashion. In the case of disagreement between the supervisor and the student as to whether the thesis should move to defence, the student does have the right to proceed to examination without the supervisor's support.
- To complete the supervisor's section of the annual audit form required by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs.
  - To discuss with the student as early as feasible, any potential joint authorships or joint ownership of data or patents which might arise, provide a written version of any understandings reached on these matters, and also ensure that student contributions to publications are adequately acknowledged. (Granting agencies and major journals have guidelines which cover some or all of these items.)
  - To discuss with the student any potential copyright issues related to external material reproduced in the thesis.
  - To maintain regular communication with the student.

## Responsibilities of Students

- To choose, with the supervisor's help, a research topic which the supervisor considers to be suitable and which he/she is competent to supervise.
- To work systematically and within agreed deadlines, as far as possible, in order to meet the program deadlines specified by the regulations of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs.
- To be well prepared for meetings with supervisors.
- To agree with the supervisor on a reasonable schedule for the completion of each portion of the research and thesis.
- To submit to the supervisor all research materials, as requested, and, at the agreed times, drafts of parts of the thesis for comment.
- To give serious attention to the advice and direction of the supervisor.
- To realize that the supervisor has duties and commitments that may delay access at short notice or slow down the return of a draft.
- To acknowledge direct assistance of material drawn from other scholars and researchers.
- To produce a thesis or research essay which meets the specifications and standards of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs and the department.
- To submit the thesis to the judgment of the department via the examination procedures specified and to abide by the judgment of the examiners, subject to any appeal on grounds of procedural irregularities.
- To respect copyright regulations when reproducing external material in the thesis.



- To maintain regular communication with the supervisor.

The full policy is available here: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/graduate-supervision-responsibilities-expectations-policy/>

## What To Expect...

What students can expect of supervisors	What supervisors can expect of students
Help to select and plan a suitable and manageable research topic	A commitment to the research topic, and to the work that is entailed in completing it successfully
Help to set up and stick to a research plan	Willingness to develop and stick to a research plan
Being available for consultations about the project	Seeking the supervisor's advice if needed
To respond to the student's writing in a timely, thorough, and constructive manner	To submit drafts to the supervisor (as agreed upon)
To advise the student on the committee membership for the thesis/research essay project	To meet with the supervisor (and other committee member(s) as appropriate)
To notify the student and the graduate supervisor if prolonged absences jeopardize the supervision	To recognize that supervisors and committee members have other teaching, research, and administrative duties that might at times conflict with supervision duties
To provide advice about funding opportunities and doctoral programs (if appropriate)	To meet the requirements set by the University and the Department, including format requirements and research ethics guidelines
To advise students about any changes that might be required by other committee members	To take seriously and to respond to comments and suggestions
To acknowledge the student's contribution towards joint research projects in appropriate ways	To be scrupulous in acknowledging sources of assistance or information
To provide letters of recommendation	To be professional in requests for reference letters and the provision of appropriate time and information

## Finding a topic, finding a supervisor

Whether you decide on the research essay or the thesis option, you will need a good topic and a suitable supervisor. These are a few things to keep in mind on your search:



### *The Topic*

- The topic should be interesting and relevant to you.
- The topic should tackle a problem in the world and the research literature.
- The topic should lend itself to investigation through methods that you can learn and master within the time and resources that you have.
- You should start thinking about your topic early and choose courses that help you develop your topic.
- You should not write term papers that you intend to be thesis chapters.

### *The Supervisor*

- You should approach potential supervisors with your topic ideas, preferably in the Winter term of the first year.
- Your supervisor can help you to define and shape your topic, proposal and research plan.
- Your supervisor should be familiar with the literature and/or methodology in your proposed topic area.
- Your supervisor is not your supervisor until they have signed the departmental form of agreement (see Appendix I and Appendix II of this handbook)
- Your supervisor might choose not to “sign on” until you have completed a preliminary proposal that sets out the scope and course of the project.
- You should not switch supervisors unless there has been a breakdown in communications or you are switching your topic. In this case, please consult the graduate supervisor.
- If you have not found a supervisor for your intended topic towards the end of the Winter term of the first year, please see the graduate supervisor for further suggestions and/or discuss with your faculty mentor.
- Do not register for the thesis or research essay if you have not yet secured a supervisor.
- Generally, the supervisor and the second reader, or other committee members are full-time faculty members in Communication. In general, avoid pursuing co-supervisory relationships. If you have an exceptional situation, please speak to the graduate supervisor.

## Writing the Research Essay, MA Thesis, or PhD Dissertation

These are general guidelines and may differ depending on consultation with your supervisor and/or the graduate supervisor.

- Stay in touch with your supervisor, your proposal, your timeline, and your peers.
- In the end, you are the person who is setting and checking on the deadlines. So, make a habit of being both realistic and ambitious with your plans.
- Researching and writing a larger project tends to be a solitary activity, so make sure to

maintain a network of peers to share work with: Thesis/research essay support groups that are devoted to discussing the members' work on a regular basis are highly recommended. Try to establish a group before you start your project.

- Make sure to discuss the progress of your research regularly with your supervisor even if you have no written work to discuss or are experiencing difficulties. Dropping out of sight is not going to solve any problems.
- Maintain a schedule, set yourself achievable and verifiable deadlines (for example: graduate student conference presentations, submitting draft chapters to the supervisor, sharing drafts with other students).
- Expect and welcome comments and criticism: research projects are great opportunities for improving your skills, so do not be too content with the first draft.
- Allow your readers sufficient time for making comments; and allow yourself enough time to address their comments.
- Be aware of deadlines and other regulations: the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs regulations establish final dates for defending and submitting theses for each term as well as formatting and presentation requirements. Please consult the graduate calendar.

## Student Registration Information

### *Student Status*

Full- or part-time status is established at the time of admission to a program. Graduate students admitted and registered as full-time students are expected 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.

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

## Change of Status from Full-Time to Part-Time

Students who have valid reasons and/or extenuating circumstances for changing status from full- to part-time prior to registration for a term should first consult with their supervisor and may apply for permission by:

- Contacting the Graduate Supervisor stating the reason(s) for seeking exemption from the full-time registration requirements in Section 7.9 of the Graduate Calendar, and by completing the Academic Change Form in support of their request.
- Please note that TA and RA positions, are not available to part-time students.
- It is understood that such a status change will be granted only in **exceptional cases** (e.g., for medical reasons, full-time employment when supported by a letter from the student's

employer, students already on extension). The form is available here:  
[https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Academic\\_Registration-Change-Form-1.pdf](https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Academic_Registration-Change-Form-1.pdf)

## Loss of Status

Any student who remains unregistered in their degree program for three terms (twelve months) will lose their graduate status.

## Continuous Registration in Thesis, Dissertation, or Research Essay

Any student (full-time or part-time), after initial registration in a thesis or research essay, must maintain this registration in all successive terms (including the term in which the student is examined) until their thesis or research essay is completed. Completion means submission of a final grade to FGPA (Grad Studies) after modifications/revisions. Students should note that faculty approval to register in the thesis or research essay is given on the understanding that the student will be in regular contact with their supervisor, and that the thesis research will be actively pursued in each term of registration.

## Summer Registration

During the summer term, **MA students in their first year** can choose not to register. However, there are some important consequences to consider and be aware of. **If a student does not register any funding allotted to the summer term will be cancelled and cannot be deferred.** Once the student registers (full-time) again in the Fall, any subsequent funding will carry on like usual.

If the student has a summer TAship, they must submit a Leave from Duties form (available in Carleton Central) to defer the TAship to a subsequent term. If a student has an RA position, they must remain registered. Please note, non-registration is not a pause button – the timeline to completion carries on regardless of registration status, so the summer term will still count towards a student's overall time limit. Students are encouraged to reach out to the library to see if access will still be available during the summer and supervisors should also be consulted.

## Leave of Absence

Sometimes students require a leave of absence because they are unable to focus on their studies due to personal or other issues they are dealing with. It is important that students discuss this option with their supervisor first and the Graduate Supervisor. Ultimately, it is FGPA (Grad Studies) who will determine whether an exemption from registration and a leave of absence will be granted.

To apply, use the form linked below but in the 'Reason for this request' you may copy and paste one of these options if they fit your circumstances (or create your own short phrase if these

options do not work for you) and explain the extenuating circumstance:

- Navigating medical-related issues
- Navigating mental health issues
- Death of a loved one
- Personal/family matters
- Pregnancy/parental leave
- Increased caregiving responsibilities
- Temporary increase in work-related responsibilities

The form is available here:

[https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Academic\\_Registration-Change-Form-1.pdf](https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Academic_Registration-Change-Form-1.pdf)

Exemptions are normally granted for one term, but in extraordinary circumstances an exemption may be granted for a longer period.

When a leave of absence (LOA) for a term or terms has been approved by the Dean of FGPA, this period will be exempt from the overall time limit allowed for completion of the program. Students should also apply for a Leave from Duties so that any TAs they hold will be deferred until they are back. If the Leave is approved, any funding is also deferred.

For Exemption from Time Limit procedure/forms, please visit:

<http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/forms-policies/#Academic-Forms>

## Exemption from Registration

Students who have valid reasons for not registering for a term may apply for 'permission to remain unregistered' by:

- Contacting the Dean of FGPA by completing the 'Academic Change Form' (available here: [https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Academic\\_Registration-Change-Form-1.pdf](https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Academic_Registration-Change-Form-1.pdf))
- Students who are not registered should not be on campus for the term and should not use any University facilities (that is, library, laboratories, computer centre, etc.), or receive any supervision, including supervision through correspondence.
- Students applying for maternity/parental leave will not be registered, nor will they be required to pay fees for this period. They will not be eligible to receive awards administered by Carleton University during the leave. In the case of other awards, the regulations of the particular granting agency will apply. The time limit for completion of the program will be extended by the duration of the leave taken. Please contact the Graduate Administrator for more information.

The Graduate Administrator can also offer more information about taking a leave of absence or

applying for maternity or parental leave. Also, the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) offers grants for a range of situations, including a Childcare Grant, Family Leave Grant, Health Leave Grant, and others. See the GSA website for more information: <https://gsacarleton.ca/>

## Reinstatement

Students whose files have been closed as a result of failure to observe continuous registration requirements or who have lost their status for non-registration must apply for reinstatement if they wish to continue their studies. This is done by contacting the Communication Graduate Administrator to discuss gaining the approval of the department and by completing the 'Academic Change Form' (available here: [https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Academic\\_Registration-Change-Form-1.pdf](https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Academic_Registration-Change-Form-1.pdf)). Contact FGPA for information on the fees incurred with this request.

# Degree completion for MA (MRE or thesis) and PhD

## Electronic Thesis Deposit

These steps should be reviewed with your supervisor and the Graduate Administrator, Laura Gareau, as you approach the final phase of your MA (MRE or thesis) or PhD.

In the case of a MA thesis or PhD dissertation, registration must be maintained until your final approved copy is uploaded electronically through Carleton Central. Should the final copy not be uploaded by 4:00 p.m. of the last day for late registration in a given term, the student will be required to register for that term. If deposit follows very shortly thereafter, you may be able to apply for a partial refund of fees.

All thesis forms and policies, including templates and formatting guidelines can be found here: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/>

## Graduation

Students must apply to graduate on Carleton Central under 'Student Online Applications' by the following deadlines:

- September 1 (for Fall graduation)
- December 1 (for Winter graduation)
- April 1 (for Spring graduation)

Students graduating in Winter have the option of participating in Spring convocation. Please see the Graduate Administrator, for more information.

# Appendix I

## MA Thesis/MRE Advisory Committee Form

To be completed and filed with Graduate Administrator. The following committee has agreed to advise:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate's name - print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

on their work in the MA Program of Communication of the School of Journalism and Communication at Carleton University subject to the regulations of the Graduate Faculty Board of the University and the School. The student having enrolled in, and been admitted to the Program, signifies in the selection and acceptance of the committee members, their willingness to accept the committee's advice and voluntarily carry out the Program of study and the examination which they have jointly formulated.

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Supervisor:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Signature Date

Member:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Signature Date

Approval of Graduate Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date

---

### COMMITTEE CHANGES:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

have withdrawn from participation in the above named student's Advisory committee.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

have agreed to work with the above named MA candidate as a member of the committee identified above. The Supervisor of the committee has been informed and consented to this change.

Approval of Graduate Supervisor:  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# Appendix II

## Ph.D. Dissertation Advisory Committee Form

To be completed and filed with the Graduate Administrator. The following committee has agreed to advise:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate's name - print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate's Signature

on their work in the Ph.D. Program in Communication at the School of Journalism and Communication of Carleton University subject to the regulations of the Graduate Faculty Board of the University and the Department. The student having enrolled in, and been admitted to the Program, signifies in the selection and acceptance of the committee members, their willingness to accept the committee's advice and voluntarily carry out the program of study and the examination which they have jointly formulated.

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Supervisor:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Signature Date

Members:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Signature Date

Approval of Graduate Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

COMMITTEE CHANGES

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/print Signature

have withdrawn from participation in the above named student's Advisory committee.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/print Signature

have agreed to work with the above named Ph.D. candidate as a member of the committee identified above. The Supervisor of the committee has been informed and consented to this change.

Approval of Graduate Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

# Appendix III

## MA Thesis Proposal Guidelines

Your thesis proposal should have a working title and should be approximately 3500- 4000 words long. Its main purpose is to tell the committee what you are going to do in your thesis and how you are going to do it. It is not an essay. After reading the proposal, the readers should have a clear understanding of what the boundaries of your project are and how you are going to complete it. They should understand its theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions and be convinced of its intellectual and social relevance. It should include the following elements:

1. Specify your thesis statement or working argument. Focus on its logic and use theorized language to describe it. It should be succinct and clearly stated in one sentence. It answers the question: "What is my thesis arguing?" This should also be reflected in your title. Some people have a thesis question; others prefer to write it as a statement.
2. Provide a literature review in which you provide a sample of written academic work that relates to your topic. You will locate your project in relation to the other body or bodies of relevant academic literature. It answers the question, "What have others in my field(s) done and what gaps in their work will my research address?" It is often helpful to generate a set of research questions out of the literature review.
3. 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 concepts and notions 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.
4. Identify your research methodology or process. This answers the "how" questions of your project. How will I actually go about conducting this research? You should think about the object of analysis, how you will gather information about it or from it, and how will you make sense of it.
5. Provide a timetable for your research and thesis writing. Include dates for draft and chapter submissions to committee members and allow 3-4 weeks for return of work from your committee. The timeline is only useful if it is realistic.
6. Include a bibliography of sources you cite in the proposal and other relevant writings in the area.
7. Provide a statement of ethics considerations if you are working with human subjects. See the university guidelines for the ethics committee application form.

## Thesis guidelines

**For MA students, thesis guidelines should be discussed with your supervisor and committee.** See thesis formatting guidelines here: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/thesis-requirements/formatting-guidelines/>

## Thesis or Dissertation Cover page

See here: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Sample-Thesis-Title-Page-1.pdf>

See here for Grad Studies pdf file: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Thesis-Title-Page-template-2.pdf>

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Degree

\_\_\_\_\_  
Program

## Appendix IV

### PhD guidelines for comprehensive exams, proposal, and dissertation

#### The First Comprehensive Examination (COMS 6900)

The “First Comprehensive Examination” (“first comp”) requires students to demonstrate a broad understanding of the field of communication through engagement with its historical trajectories, intellectual traditions, key problems, defining concepts and ongoing debates. It is closely related to the course materials in the doctoral seminar (COMS 6000) and is an opportunity for students to reappraise and synthesize their work in that course. Upon completion of COMS 6000 and COMS 6900, students should have a comprehensive understanding of the field and its historical developments.

The first comp is administered by the instructors of COMS 6000. The exam is taken by students in late April or early May shortly after completion of the doctoral seminar (COMS 6000). It is a take-home exam delivered via email to students by the COMS 6000 instructors and includes an oral component.

The exam is comprised of four questions. Each instructor in COMS 6000 poses two questions, and students select one question from each instructor (two in total) and compose essay responses (two in total). Essays are typically between 3000-5000 words in length and should include a title, footnotes, a bibliography and so on (students may select the citation style that suits them). Approximately two weeks after submission of the exam, students complete the oral component of the examination by defending their answers to a board composed of the instructors of COMS 6000. The oral component is typically 45 minutes in length.

The exam is graded as pass/fail and students failing the examination will normally withdraw from the program. Both written and oral components must be completed to receive a passing grade.

Notes: To be eligible for the first comprehensive examination candidates must have a GPA of 10.0 or higher on their previous course work, including COMS 6000.

Sample exams from previous years are available upon request to the Graduate Administrator.

#### The Second Comprehensive Examination (COMS 6901)

The “Second Comprehensive Examination” (“second comp”) requires students to conduct a “literature review” on an identifiable tradition, sub-field, problem or thematic in the field of communication. It is intended to demonstrate an ability to organize, synthesize and critique a body of scholarship relevant to one’s expertise, and to prepare students to carry out

independent research. In most circumstances, the second comp would contribute to the theoretical framework and/or literature review of the dissertation and help define the student's area of expertise. The second comp examination includes: (1) submission of a written comprehensive paper; and (2) an oral examination.

**Eligibility:** To be eligible for the second comprehensive examination candidates must have completed COMS 6000 (Doctoral Seminar in Communication Studies) and COMS 6900 (First Comprehensive Exam).

**Timeline:** Normally it takes one full year to complete the second comp. Students typically start working on the proposal in the Summer term of Year 1, for their committee's approval in the beginning of the Fall term of Year 2. This will allow students to submit the written paper and defend it at the oral examination in the Winter term of Year 2.

**Committee:** The committee for the second comp is comprised of three members: a supervisor and, typically, two additional faculty in the department. The committee members are determined by the student in consultation with the supervisor. The second comp committee can continue to be, but may be different from, the committee established for the dissertation work.

**Written paper:** The second comp paper is developed by the student in consultation with the supervisor and committee. It requires a proposal (approximately 500-1000 words) that outlines the goals, rationale, and timeline for completion of the comp, and a complete list of the books, articles and materials consulted for the exam (including 25 books or a combination of books and articles where five (5) articles constitute one book). It is highly encouraged that students include a detailed timeline that allows adequate time for supervisor and committee feedback on drafts, if necessary, and the final submission. Upon the approval of the proposal, the student develops the paper, primarily in consultation with the supervisor. The length should be 10,000-12,000 words (i.e. 30-40 pages), not including references.

**Oral examination:** Upon submission of the written paper and the approval by all members of the committee, the student and supervisor are responsible for scheduling the exam. The exam may be held during any time of the year (Fall / Winter /Summer). An oral examination typically includes: (1) an oral presentation (10-15 minutes) synthesizing the main points of the paper; (2) two rounds of questioning (90-100 minutes); and (3) a brief closing statement by the student (optional).

**Exam Grading:** The exam is graded satisfactory/unsatisfactory on both written and oral components by the student's committee.

**Rationale:** The second comp ensures that PhD students have: (1) an appropriate foundation and the depth and breadth of knowledge in their area of expertise; (2) the capacity to engage in scholarly communication both oral and written; and (3) appropriate knowledge to design course materials for teaching in their area of expertise.

## The Dissertation Proposal (part of COMS 6909)

The “Dissertation Proposal” (“proposal”) is a road map in which the PhD candidate outlines the steps that will be taken during the execution of their dissertation research. The goal is to provide the candidate an opportunity to articulate and receive feedback on the plan of research prior to conducting fieldwork, collecting data, or otherwise initiating their project. In it, the candidate locates the project with respect to the major theoretical traditions informing their work and outlines the major substantive research findings found within scholarship relevant to their proposal. The goal is to situate the dissertation with respect to existing scholarship and to avoid reproducing work previously done in the area. The proposal includes: (1) submission of a written proposal; and (2) an oral evaluation meeting.

**Eligibility:** The dissertation proposal is a required part of COMS 6909 (PhD Thesis). To be eligible for COMS 6909, candidates must have completed COMS 6000 (Doctoral Seminar in Communication Studies), COMS 6900 (First Comprehensive Exam), and COMS 6901 (Second Comprehensive Exam).

**Timeline:** Normally it takes six to nine months to complete the proposal. Students typically start working on the proposal and register for COMS 6909 shortly after the completion of COMS 6901. Students who complete COMS 6901 in the Winter term of Year 2 should submit the written proposal and defend it at the oral evaluation meeting in the Fall or Winter term of Year 3.

**Committee:** The committee for the dissertation proposal is typically comprised of three members: a supervisor and, typically, two additional faculty in the unit. Members of the committee are determined by the candidate in consultation with the supervisor. The proposal committee can be a continuation of, but may be different from, the second comp committee. Except in extremely rare circumstances, the proposal committee will be the candidate’s PhD thesis committee.

**Written proposal:** The doctoral proposal is developed by the candidate in consultation with the committee. At an early stage of writing the proposal, the candidate should schedule an in-person preparation meeting with the committee to discuss an outline (with a bibliography) or an early draft of the proposal. The proposal is typically 15,000 words long (i.e. 40-50 pages) (not including references) and should include: a concise literature review; a clear explanation of the main question or problem(s) to be addressed and how it relates to research in the field; a discussion of theoretical approach(es) from which question(s) or problem(s) will be explored; a description of the methodology and main source materials to be used in the research; and a proposed timeframe for completion. If a research ethics clearance is required, this should be addressed as well.

**Oral evaluation meeting:** Upon submission of the written proposal and its approval by all members of the committee, the candidate and the supervisor are responsible for scheduling a meeting. The meeting may be held during any time of the year (Fall / Winter / Summer) and

typically includes: (1) an oral presentation (10-15 minutes) synthesizing the main points of the proposal; (2) two rounds of questioning (90-100 minutes); and (3) a closing statement by the student (optional).

Grading: There is no grade associated with the proposal. Both written and oral components, however, must meet the standard acceptable to the committee.

## Dissertation guidelines

**For PhD students, dissertation guidelines should be discussed with your supervisor and committee.** The university does have existing formatting requirements and recommendations. See thesis/dissertation formatting guidelines here: <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/thesis-requirements/formatting-guidelines/>