



School of Kinesiology and Health Studies

PhD Handbook

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Preamble

The doctoral program in the School of Kinesiology and Health Studies (SKHS) offers degrees in one of the fields of Biomechanics and Neuromechanics, Exercise Physiology, Health Promotion, Physical Activity Epidemiology, Sport Psychology, and Sociocultural Studies of Sport, Health, and the Body. This handbook outlines the general expectations of the SKHS PhD Program and is intended to provide direction to doctoral students and their supervisors as they progress in the program.

This handbook should be read in conversation with the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs' (SGSPA) [Academic Calendar](#), which outlines the higher-level policies and procedures regulating the SKHS PhD program.

Degree Requirements

The SKHS PhD program involves three stages: preparation for research (course requirements); certification of preparation (comprehensive exams); and thesis proposal, research, and thesis.

1. PhD students are required to complete at least two graduate level courses while enrolled in SKHS. Students must complete a minimum of six one-term graduate level courses beyond the bachelor's degree.
2. Other courses may be taken to ensure that the student has sufficient background to undertake the proposed research.
3. Course in Human Research Ethics
4. Completion of Queen's Health and Safety Awareness Training
5. Completion of Queen's AODA Training Suite
6. Minimum 80% attendance at the SKHS Graduate Seminar Series
7. Comprehensive examination, which must be defended orally
8. Thesis proposal, which must be defended orally
9. A Doctoral Thesis, which must be defended orally

Funding

All full-time PhD students receive a guaranteed minimum funding package of \$20,000 a year for the first 1-4 years of their studies, granted they maintain good academic standing. A funding package can comprise funding from any combination of the following:

- Internal Awards or Fellowships: Queen's based funding (e.g., Queen's Graduate Award)
- External Awards: Competitive awards that students must apply to, and which are competitive based on merit.
- Teaching Assistantships or Teaching Fellowships: Employment-based funding opportunities
- Research Assistantships: Employment-based funding opportunities to work on faculty-based research projects.

- Graduate Research Fellowship: Funding, typically from a supervisor, dedicated for students to complete research activities related to the student's own thesis, project, or graduate studies.

All students are expected to submit applications for external funding if they are eligible. For domestic students, the major external funding opportunity is the Canada Graduate Scholarships – Doctoral (CGS-D) competition, a federal program of scholarships awarded through the following agencies: the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). More information about this, and other external funding opportunities, can be found [here](#).

All students who are eligible are required to submit applications for the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS). The OGS awards are intended primarily for Canadian citizens and for landed immigrants; however, a small number of awards may be made to student visa holders who are students at Queen's. More information about the OGS can be found [here](#).

Students should familiarize themselves with the department's funding allocation policies, outlined here: [SKHS Graduate Student Funding Principles of Allocation](#). As well, students may consult with SGSPA's [Student Funding Guide](#) and [Awards & Bursaries](#) webpage for more information.

Timeline to Completion and Progress Reports

The standard time limit for completion for doctoral students is 4 years (12 terms). Extensions to the time limit are possible. See the SGSPA [General Regulations](#) for more details.

To comply with the SGSPA General Regulations, all SKHS doctoral students are required to complete and submit bi-annual progress reports. To be in good academic standing, students must make continuous and satisfactory progress toward the completion of their degree, which is tracked through a master copy of their progress report form. Failure to submit these regular updates could affect a student's ability to proceed in the program. When a student is not meeting progress standards, the SKHS Graduate Coordinator will meet with the student and supervisor to create an action plan for the student's progress.

A student's progress report is confidential between them, their supervisor, and the SKHS Graduate Coordinator. They are secured in the student's graduate file.

The SKHS Graduate Assistant will request the completion and submission of progress reports every January and July of an academic year.

[SKHS Science Student Progress Report Form](#)
[SKHS Socio-Cultural Student Progress Report Form](#)

Coursework

Students should review the SKHS Graduate Course Timetable, which is posted each August on our website: [SKHS Graduate Timetable](#). In consultation with their supervisor, students should select appropriate courses during their first year. All courses are 3.0 credit units except KHS 899 (PhD Thesis Research), which is 6.0 credit units.

The complete SKHS course catalogue can be found in the SGSPA Academic Calendar [here](#). Please note that not all courses are offered in any one year. If a course is not offered in one year, it is frequently offered in the subsequent year.

Graduate students must submit their course selections to the SKHS Graduate Assistant at skhs.grad@queensu.ca in order to be registered. Students wishing to register for an Independent Study should complete this form the [KHS 895 & KHS 897 Independent Study Form](#) and submit to the SKHS Graduate Assistant prior to registration. Students wishing to register for a course outside of the department must complete an [Academic Change Form](#) with their signature and signatures from the course instructor and their supervisor. Students should submit this form to the SKHS Grad Assistant for further processing.

Graduate Supervision

The relationship between students and their supervisors in our program is a critical part of developing research projects, theses, and dissertations. SKHS doctoral students confirm their supervisor during the application process and rely on their supervisor as a first point-of-contact thereafter. The supervisor is responsible for guiding students' research and writing, as well as overseeing their course selection and progress reporting. Though it is the responsibility of students to initiate action and meet all degree requirement deadlines, the supervisor is expected to regularly assist in students' progression.

To help facilitate productive meetings, students and supervisors may use the SKHS [Student & Supervisor Meeting Form](#). Student may request that this signed form be filed in their Graduate file by submitting it to the Graduate Assistant at skhs.grad@queensu.ca.

Students and their supervisors should familiarize themselves with the [Graduate Supervision Policy](#), which outlines the roles and responsibilities of graduate students, graduate supervisors and graduate programs. The Policy also includes a detailed conflict resolution process that is unique to managing conflict that may out of the student-supervisor relationship.

SGSPA offers several resources for facilitating positive supervisory relationships. Students and supervisors are encouraged to use the following if helpful:

[Graduate Supervision Handbook](#)

[Setting Expectations Guide Workbook](#)

[Navigating Graduate Student Concerns: A Resource Guide for Graduate Students](#)

[Productive Supervisory Relationships: Making Assumptions Explicit \(a one-page conversation guide\)](#)

Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination is a key milestone of the PhD program as it determines whether students have developed the necessary background, knowledge, and academic competencies required to successfully continue their research. During the exam, doctoral students must demonstrate general knowledge of their field of study, and expertise in their own research area. The exam has both written and oral component. It is held after a student has completed their required coursework, normally during the third term of study.

To administer the comprehensive exam, students and their supervisor are to select an examining committee, comprised of 2 examiners (in addition to the supervisor, who will serve as examiner) and a chair. The SKHS Graduate Assistant can identify an exam chair, if necessary.

The comprehensive examination format and process is different for students specializing in the sciences and students specializing in socio-cultural studies. Students and supervisors should carefully review the relevant comprehensive examination guidelines:

[Socio-Cultural Studies PhD Comprehensive Examination](#)

[Science PhD Comprehensive Examination](#)

During the oral component of the comprehensive examination, the exam Chair, on behalf of the examining committee, is required to complete the following forms and submit to the SKHS Graduate Assistant.

[PhD Comprehensive Examination - Report of the Examining Committee](#)

[PhD Comprehensive Examination - Decision Sheet](#)

Upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination, students' forms are submitted to SGSPA. SGSPA issues a formal letter to acknowledge the examination completion and updates student transcripts to reflect the milestone achievement.

Thesis Proposal Defense

Students begin their Thesis Proposals during their third term of study (during or immediately after the comprehensive examination period). The proposal is typically between 10 and 20 pages, double spaced. The format for this document may vary, but it generally should include the following components:

1. Rationale: a brief description of the significance of the study. The rationale should explain why such a study is relevant to already established or ongoing work in the field(s) of study.
2. Overview of literature: a concise review of relevant literature in the field of study. The literature review should contextualize the proposal's rationale.

3. Problem statement: a statement that clearly outlines the specific problem to be studied and indicates the limitations of the study.
4. Proposed methodology: a description of the proposed methodology. This section should clearly articulate proposed methods of data collection and analysis. For those students who intend to engage with human research participants, further ethics clearance may be required.
5. References: the proposal should use consistent citational practices and should include references in the style that is most appropriate for the research area.

Thesis Advisory Committee

As doctoral students prepare their formal Thesis Proposal, they must work with their supervisor to form a Thesis Advisory Committee. This usually happens in the fourth term of study, during or shortly after the comprehensive examination period. The Thesis Advisory Committee should be formed before the student engages in significant research (e.g., data collection and/or data analysis).

The Thesis Advisory Committee includes the student's supervisor and/or co-supervisor and two other faculty members (one of whom must be an SKHS faculty member, the other of whom may be from another Queen's department or another university). Community experts or other specialists may be asked to participate when appropriate.

Thesis Advisory Committee Meeting

The Thesis Advisory Committee will meet to discuss and approve a student's Thesis Proposal. The purpose of the meeting is to provide a consultative process for the student to ensure that:

1. The quantity and quality of the research plan is well defined and feasible. The thesis project is achievable.
2. The proposed methodology is appropriate.
3. The student is prepared to undertake the work.
4. The student, supervisor and committee agree to scope of the thesis project identified.

Each member of the Committee must be provided with a copy of the student's Thesis Proposal at least five working days in advance of the meeting date. The supervisor will record the Committee's discussion using the [Thesis Advisory Committee Meeting Form](#). This form must be signed by all Committee members and the student.

Often, students are required to make amendments to their Thesis Proposal. These amendments should be outlined on the Committee meeting form and once made, must be approved by the Committee.

The following documents must be submitted to the SKHS Graduate Assistant (skhs.grad@queensu.ca):

1. The signed Thesis Advisory Committee Meeting Form
2. A PDF version of the approved Thesis Proposal.
3. If the original proposal required changes, confirmation that these changes have been approved by the Thesis Advisory Committee.

These documents will be placed in the student's file.

Thesis Formatting

All dissertations must conform to the style and form requirements as detailed in either [SKHS Format of Traditional Thesis](#) or [SKHS Format of Manuscript Style Thesis](#).

See also SGSPA thesis formatting requirements and other resources [here](#).

Oral Thesis Examination

Preparation

1. The supervisor will notify the SKHS Graduate Assistant of the Oral Examination by emailing a completed and signed [PhD Oral Thesis Examination Form](#) to SKHS Graduate Assistant. The form must be submitted *no later than 30 working days* before the scheduled exam.
2. If the supervisor needs assistance finding a Chair or a Head's Delegate, they should inform the Graduate Assistant of this when submitting the exam form.
3. The Graduate Assistant will then forward the completed oral exam form to SGSPA along with an up-to-date transcript and a copy of the student's CORE Ethics Certificate. *Note: students should review their transcript in SOLUS prior to scheduling their oral exam. If there are any missed grades, they should contact the SKHS Grad Assistant immediately.*
4. The student should submit a copy of their thesis to the SKHS Graduate Assistant at least *25 days in advance* of the oral thesis examination. A PDF copy of the thesis must also be submitted to SGSPA (thesis@queensu.ca) to be reviewed for formatting. The student will be notified of any required corrections.

Students should review the SGSPA website [here](#) for more details about the administration of doctoral oral thesis examinations.

Format

1. The candidate, examiners, and the chair are introduced. The candidate is asked to leave the room.
2. The chair reads the confidential examiner reports, asking for clarification if needed. The chair outlines the exam procedures.

3. The candidate is invited to return to the room and is asking to give a brief 10–20-minute presentation about their thesis (science dissertations only).
4. Examiner questioning begins with each examiner getting 15-20 minutes to ask their questions. The order of questioning is: external-external examiner, internal-external examiner, internal examiner, head or delegate, graduate supervisor.
5. There may be two or more rounds of questioning.
6. When the question period is done, the candidate will be asked to leave the room.
7. The chair will ask examiners to discuss the candidate's thesis and responses during questioning. Examiners will be asked to choose one of the four result categories: (1) passed, (2) passed with major revisions, (3) referred, and (4) failed.
8. The candidate will be asked to return into the room and will be told the result of the exam. The candidate and chair will sign the necessary forms required by SGSPA.
9. The chair will return all documentation to SGSPA.
10. Where revisions are required, the student will update their document and submit their final thesis to the supervisor for approval. The supervisor will notify SGSPA if the thesis revisions have been approved.

SKHS Graduate Seminar Series

SKHS values the interdisciplinary nature between the program's research areas and labs. The SKHS Graduate Seminar Series is a forum for all graduate students and faculty to share their research and to learn about the diverse work happening in the department. The Seminar Series aims to:

- Foster critical academic discussion between students and faculty members from all disciplines within our School
- Expand knowledge about topics from the broad fields of Kinesiology and Health Studies
- Develop graduate students' communication skills by providing opportunity for them to present their research to peers

Graduate Seminars are held once a month during the Fall and Winter terms. All dates, times, locations will be provided to students before the beginning of Fall term.

Attendance Requirement

Attendance at Graduate Seminars is mandatory for all 1-2 year master's students and 1-4 year doctoral students. Students must attend a minimum of 80% of the total number of seminars offered during an academic year.

Students may submit requests for exemption by completing the [Graduate Seminar Attendance Exemption Form](#) with their supervisor's signature. Students should submit this form to the SKHS Graduate Assistant.

More details about the SKHS Graduate Seminar Series can be found in the [SKHS Graduate Seminar Series Terms of Reference](#).

Teaching Assistantships

A Teaching Assistantship (TA) is a contractual agreement between the School of Kinesiology and Health Studies (Queen's University) and a graduate student to provide a specified number of hours of teaching support during a term. All Teaching Assistants and TA contracts are protected by the [PSAC 901 Unit 1 - Collective Agreement](#).

Teaching Assistantships serve several functions:

- They provide teaching support to the undergraduate programs of the School.
- They are a basic source of financial support for graduate students.
- They are an important part of the professional development of graduate students.

As of 2023, SKHS has standardized TA positions across undergraduate courses as either “full TA positions” of 120 hours or “half TA positions” of 60 hours. There are also a limited number of 20-hour administrative TA positions available in 400-level seminar courses.

For more information about Teaching Assistantships in SKHS, please review our [Teaching Assistant Handbook](#).

Eligibility

SKHS TA positions will be appointed according to the order of preference laid out in Article 12.04 of the PSAC 901, Unit 1 Collective Agreement:

1. First Preference – Group
 - SKHS students who are within their funding eligibility window (years 1-2 for master's, years 1-4 doctoral).
2. Second Preference – Group B
 - SKHS students who are in their first unfunded year of their graduate studies program.
3. Third Preference – Group C
 - SKHS students who are beyond their first unfunded year of their studies.

Process

The SKHS Graduate Assistant will circulate a TA Position Preference Survey in May or June of each year. The survey will include a full list of TA positions available for the following academic year. It will ask continuing students/TAs to list their top four preferences for TA positions for each term.

The Graduate Assistant will work with the Graduate Coordinator and the Undergraduate Coordinator to assign TA positions. Student preferences will be considered alongside other



factors (faculty preferences, student background/suitability, and undergraduate needs) to allocate all positions. Although effort will be made to match students to their preferred TA positions, at times, this may not be possible.

Graduate TAs will be offered positions via email by the Graduate Assistant in July of each year with instructions for how to accept or decline in the PeopleSoft/SOLUS system.

Teaching Assistant Evaluations

Every term, TAs are provided the opportunity to receive evaluation from their students. If TAs are interested in receiving evaluation, they must complete the [TA Evaluation Process and Response Form](#).

Required Training

All graduate TAs are required to complete the following training prior to beginning any work as a TA. Typically, this training is completed at the SKHS Graduate Orientation before Fall term. All TAs will be compensated at the TA pay rate (confirmed in the PSAC Collective Agreement) for the 10.5-11 hours of training.

1. Teaching Assistantship Roundtable at SKHS Graduate Orientation (1 hour)
2. AODA Suite via Online Equity Training (4 hours)
3. Health and Safety Awareness Tutorial (1 hour)
4. CORE Ethics Online Tutorial (0.5 hour)
5. PSAC 901 Sexual Violence Prevention and Anti-Racism Training (1 hour)
6. Lab Orientation for Exercise Science Students
7. How to TA: Tips for Success (2 hours)

Totals:

Exercise Science students: 11 hours total

SocioCultural students: 10.5 hours total

Teaching Fellowships

Teaching Fellows (TF) are graduate students who serve as the sole instructor of an undergraduate course. TFs are responsible for all aspects of curriculum and assessment for their course. TF positions are beneficial educational experiences and SKHS makes every effort to distribute TFs among qualified SKHS applicants in any given year. Hiring decisions for TF positions are made with SKHS's undergraduate teaching quality and needs as high priorities. Fellowship applications are adjudicated by the SKHS Teaching Fellow Appointments Subcommittee (Director, Associate Director/Graduate Coordinator, Department Manager/Undergraduate Chair). The committee's terms of reference can be found here: [TF Appointments Subcommittee Terms of Reference](#).

All TFs and TF contracts are protected by the [PSAC 901 Unit 1 - Collective Agreement](#).

For more information about Teaching Assistantships in SKHS, please review our [Teaching Fellow Handbook](#).

Human Research Ethics

All SKHS graduate students must complete the [CORE Ethics Certificate](#). Completion of this certificate is usually done at Grad Orientation.

The SKHS Unit Research Ethics Secretary is Josie Birchall, who is available at bitchalj@queensu.ca. Her office is located in the SKHS Admin Office KHS 206A.

Application Procedures:

1. Prepare your research proposal, methods, and questionnaire(s) as applicable.
2. Meet with your supervisor to review your application and attach either an email or letter with their approval.
3. Use: [TRAQ Registration](#).
4. Upload your application and all attachments to [TRAQ](#).
5. Log in to [TRAQ](#) using your Queen's Net ID and password and complete the steps in sequence.
6. Hit SUBMIT to finalize submission and send it to the SKHS Unit REB.

SKHS has a Unit Research Ethics Board (Unit REB) that assists in processing all research related documentation. Your documentation will be reviewed by the Unit REB for accuracy, completeness, and to ensure that it follows all required policies, procedures and guidelines established by the University.

Steps to be completed for SKHS Unit REB review:

1. Review by the SKHS Unit REB will be completed within three weeks of your submission
2. You will receive notification through TRAQ from the Unit REB if your submission requires edits
3. All projects will then be forwarded to the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) for final review and approval
4. GREB will notify you directly if further edits are required and when your application is approved
5. SKHS Unit REB will receive an approval letter for SKHS files

Upon receipt of written approval from the Queen's General Research Ethics Board (GREB) – you may proceed with your project.

Some ethics projects will require approval through the [Health Sciences Research Board](#).

The School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs Policies and Regulations

Maternity and Parental Leave

Graduate students who wish to take a maternity and/or parental leave from their program of study may register as inactive without prejudice to their academic standing.

To request a maternity and/or parental leave, please complete the [Maternity and Parental Leave Notification Form](#) or access an online version of the form the [SGSPA Forms Dashboard](#).

For more information about maternity and parental leaves, please review [SGSPA - Academic Calendar - Admission and Registration](#).

Medical Leave

Graduate students may apply for a leave of absence on medical grounds, for one term (4 months) and up to a maximum of three terms (12 months) without prejudice to their academic standing. Students are required to send a request for a medical leave of absence in writing to the Director, Admissions and Students Services, School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs, and must provide documentation from a doctor or health care practitioner to support a medical leave of absence for the duration requested.

Students will be registered as inactive for the duration of the approved medical leave. A tuition fee waiver for the period of the medical leave will be granted. It is understood that students on approved medical leave will not undertake academic or research work during the period of leave.

Transfer from Full-Time to Part-Time

In general, students registered in full-time programs are expected to maintain full-time status throughout their programs. Requests for change of status from full-time to part-time must be approved both by the Department/Program and by the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs; such requests may not be approved until after the student has completed the period of BIU eligibility (6 terms for Master's and 13 terms for Doctoral students).

For more information about transfers from full-time to part-time, please review [SGSPA - Academic Calendar - Admission and Registration](#).

To request a transfer to part-time studies, please complete the [Part Time Request Form](#) or access an online version of the form the [SGSPA Forms Dashboard](#).