

**Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry**  
**Medical Sciences Graduate Program**  
**Outline of Responsibilities**

The Medical Sciences Graduate Program strives for excellence in graduate studies, where students are highly motivated to make original contributions in science, and to complete their PhD program with peer-reviewed publications.

There are several important players within the Medical Sciences Graduate Program team, each with key responsibilities. The team is comprised of the following:

1. Student;
2. Supervisor;
3. Supervisory Committee;
4. Graduate Coordinator;
5. Medical Sciences Graduate Programs Committee (MSGPC);
6. Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR).

This document is designed to help you understand the roles of the team players and the responsibilities of each.

**1. THE GRADUATE STUDENT** (Including those in Interdisciplinary Programs with other home departments)

**Responsibilities**

1. Is aware of the contents of the graduate portions of the Calendar and take responsibility for their own program as set out in the Calendar.
2. Is aware of deadlines for possible scholarship applications and seek advice and assistance from the department in making applications.
3. Ensures that his/her registration is accurate and does not lapse.
4. Submits appropriate forms to the Graduate Coordinator for signature and processing.
5. Pays all fees required by the deadline dates set out in the Calendar.
6. Maintains open communication with his/her Supervisor and Graduate Coordinator concerning any problems, either real or perceived.
7. Informs his/her Supervisor regularly about progress and provides his/her Supervisor with an annual report for distribution to the supervisory committee.
8. Makes research results accessible (beyond their appearance in a thesis) to an appropriate audience.
9. Follows and meets the regulations and requirements of the FGSR, the MSGPC, and the home department.

## 2. THE SUPERVISOR

### Responsibilities

1. Evaluates the Student's previous academic experience, and recommends courses that should be taken to ensure a solid and appropriate academic background is in place for the research to be undertaken.
2. Provides an environment for the Student that is conducive to research and the Student's intellectual growth.
3. Ensures that appropriate financial support for the Student's stipend is in place, or that sources of funding are available for the Student to apply for where applicable.
4. Ensures that there are sufficient financial resources and materials for the research program of each Student being supervised.
5. Ensures that the Student is aware of his/her responsibilities (as listed previously) and, when necessary, assists the Student in meeting them.
6. Provides appropriate guidance to the Student on the nature of the research and on the standards expected.
7. Is accessible to give direction, advice and constructive criticism.
8. With the Student, establishes a realistic timeline for completion of various phases of the program.
9. Establishes, with input from the Student, a Supervisory Committee within one year of the Student commencing the graduate program.
10. Ensures that the Committee maintains contact with the Student and formally meets with him/her at least once a year.
11. Informs and communicates to the Graduate Coordinator, Student, and Supervisory Committee members of all meetings, examinations, and any circumstances that arise with regard to the Student's graduate program.
12. Consults with the Student, and with the Student's full knowledge, sets up Committee meetings and examinations.
13. Completes all relevant forms, including signatures, and submits them to the Graduate Coordinator.
14. If going on leave or absent for an extended period, advises the Graduate Coordinator and MSGPC which member of the Supervisory Committee will be the Acting Supervisor.
15. Ensures, in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator and the Chair of the MSGPC as required, that the subject matter of the Student's PhD proposal falls within the broad context of Medical Sciences.
16. Assists the student as required in preparing a PhD proposal package. The PhD proposal must be submitted for approval by the MSGPC no later than 24 months after the start of the graduate program. Once approved, the process for the student's eligibility to proceed with the candidacy examination is initiated. The candidacy must be scheduled no later than 6 months after MSGPC approval of the PhD proposal. Ensures that all members of the Supervisory Committee have signed off and approved the PhD research proposal.
17. Proposals submitted should be accompanied by a **list of 5 potential reviewers outside of the Student's department in a sealed envelope.**
18. Ensures that all members of the Supervisory Committee have signed a statement approving the suitability of the thesis for examination prior to submission of the final oral examination.

### **3. THE SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE**

#### **Responsibilities**

1. Is accessible to the Student for consultation.
2. Provides guidance and advice to the Student based on area of expertise.
3. Participates in regular Committee meetings.
4. Recommends and approves courses for the Student.
5. Approves the Student's research proposal before submission to the Graduate Coordinator.
6. Signs a statement approving the suitability of the thesis for examination prior to submission of the final oral examination.
7. Participates in candidacy and final oral examinations.

### **4. THE GRADUATE COORDINATOR**

#### **Responsibilities**

1. Is responsible for the admission of students to their Department
2. Acts as the official graduate program representative of the Department to the MSGPC and the FGSR.
3. Communicates relevant information from the MSGPC and the FGSR to Students and faculty members in the Department.
4. Be accessible for consultation with Students and faculty members in the Department.
5. Ensures that Students in the Department receive proper supervision and that the regulations and requirements of the FGSR and the MSGPC are met.
6. Ensures that applications for graduate studies are complete, and that the applicants meet the admission criteria before forwarding the applications to MSGPC.
7. Ensures that a supervisor and a supervisory committee are set up within one year of the student starting the graduate program.
8. Ensures that the Supervisor has arranged appropriate financial support for the Student's stipend and research project where applicable.
9. Ensures, in consultation with the Supervisor and Chair of the MSGPC as required, that the subject matter of the student's PhD proposal falls within the broad context of Medical Sciences.
10. Reviews and approves the Student's PhD proposal prior to the package being sent to the MSGPC. The Graduate Coordinator also ensures that the proposal is submitted within 24 months of the student's graduate program start. If the proposal is not submitted within this time frame, the Graduate Coordinator ensures that a written explanation and timeline for submission is received from the supervisor and forwarded to the Chair of the MSGPC (including interdisciplinary students whose home department is not in the Medical Sciences Graduate Program).
11. Recommends to the MSGPC that the Supervisor and members of the Supervisory Committee:
  - o have the appropriate background and experience to guide the Student;
  - o have the expertise, time and ability to adequately supervise the Student;
  - o demonstrate continuing scholarly or creative activity<sup>1</sup> of an original nature;
  - o hold a continuing faculty appointment in a department relevant to the field;<sup>2</sup>
  - o hold a degree equivalent to or higher than that for which the Student is a candidate.<sup>2</sup>
  - o Assigns a co-supervisor if this is the first student to be supervised by the faculty member.<sup>3</sup>
12. Recommends the addition of a co-supervisor as required.

13. Monitors the progress of all Students in the Department, ensuring compliance with the MSGP timelines (ie submission of PhD proposal by 24 months; candidacy within 6 months of MSGP approval) and FGSR guidelines (all of a student's program requirements must be completed by the end of the third year).
14. Informs the MSGPC of changes in Student status, courses or program.
15. Chairs the candidacy and final oral examinations or delegates the responsibility as necessary. The Chair of these examinations cannot be the Supervisor.
16. At meetings of the MSGPC, summarizes proposal packages from all Students in the Department.

<sup>1</sup> Scholarly or creative activity is characterized by publication of research papers in refereed journals relevant to the discipline; publication of relevant books and/or monographs; invitations to speak at conferences or at other institutions; editorial or refereeing responsibilities for journals; invitations to serve as external examiner for other students; invitations to review grant proposals or manuscripts.

<sup>2</sup> The MSGPC and Department will consider supervisory committee members not meeting these criteria on provision of appropriate justification. The FGSR has approved eligibility criteria for service on supervisory committees by clinical appointees, adjunct professors, retired professors, and others. Details are in the Graduate Program Manual.

<sup>3</sup> Co-Supervisor must have already have supervised and completed a PhD student. Any additional requirements can be implemented at the department level.

## **5. THE MEDICAL SCIENCES GRADUATE PROGRAMS COMMITTEE**

### **Responsibilities**

1. Enhances the quality of graduate studies within member departments by facilitating excellence in all aspects of graduate education.
2. Acts as the official graduate program representative for member departments to the FGSR.
3. Sets policy for graduate programs in member Departments.
4. Establishes and updates strategic plans for continued improvement of the Medical Sciences graduate program.
5. Assesses the quality and appropriateness of the Students' graduate programs.
6. Ensures that the minimum admission requirements, course requirements, residency requirements, and length of program requirements are met.
7. Maximizes the opportunity for the Students to succeed.
8. Assesses<sup>3</sup> PhD program packages with one of the following outcomes: approval; approval with conditions; resubmission after revision or presentation to the MSGPC; rejection.
9. The Chair of the MSGPC
  - o is accessible for consultation with Students, Supervisors and Graduate Coordinators;
  - o is a member of the FGSR Council;
  - o communicates relevant information from the FGSR to Committee Members;
  - o approves applications for graduate studies before forwarding to the FGSR;
  - o may attend candidacy and final oral examinations as an observer;

- approves<sup>4</sup> the appointment of Supervisors, (and Co-Supervisors for first time Supervisors), Supervisory Committees and Examining Committees before submission to the FGSR;
- informs the Associate Dean (Research) on the status of the Medical Sciences graduate program, and on issues related to graduate studies.

<sup>3</sup> The criteria used for assessment are listed in the section "Program Requirements".

<sup>4</sup> The Chair approves initial appointments and changes of the Supervisor and Supervisory Committee. However, the MSGPC, on assessment of the PhD proposal package, may recommend changes.

## **6. FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH**

The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) is responsible for overseeing the general administration of graduate programs, from the admission and registration of graduate students through to convocation.

The FGSR is ultimately responsible for:

1. The setting of minimum entrance requirements and minimum academic standing requirements, and for ensuring that these are met.
2. Approving all changes to students' programs.
3. Submitting changes affecting policy, general and degree regulations, and so on for approval of the Council of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

The FGSR is the final authority on all matters related to graduate education.

### **PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

The Medical Sciences Graduate Program Committee (MSGPC) has approved the following program requirements for the Medical Sciences programs. These requirements exceed the minimum requirements of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in order to ensure that the best candidates are accepted into the Medical Sciences program and that the excellence of the program is maintained.

#### **Admission**

The following requirements must be met in order for a graduate Student to be accepted into a MSc or PhD program in Medical Sciences:

1. The Student must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 or equivalent.
2. For the English Language Proficiency, the Student must take **one** of the following tests and receive a satisfactory score of:
  - TOEFL paper-based score of 570
  - TOEFL internet-based score equivalent of 95, with at least 20 per section
  - MELAB minimum score of 91
  - CAEL minimum score of 70 with at least 70 on each subtest
  - IELTS minimum score of 7.0 with at least 6 on each band
  - PTE minimum score of 65

If the Graduate Coordinator and Supervisor agree that the Student be accepted with a TOEFL score between 550 and 570 or equivalent foreign language test score, it is understood that a remedial English course will be taken.

3. The Student must meet Departmental criteria over and above the minimal requirements of the Medical Sciences program.

### **Length of Program and Course Requirements**

#### **MSc Program**

The minimum length of the MSc program is 18 months. A minimum of ★3 in graded graduate level courses is required. Notwithstanding the above, students must fulfill the department's MSc program requirements as approved and stated in the department's graduate program requirements.

#### **PhD Program**

The minimum length of the PhD program is 36 months, or the department-specific requirement, where stated.

For students entering the PhD program after a BSc degree, the minimum course requirement is ★6 of graded graduate level courses listed in the Medical Sciences Graduate Program Approved Course Listing, or approved equivalent is required.

For students entering the PhD program after a MSc degree, the minimum course requirement is ★3 of graded graduate level courses listed in the Medical Sciences Graduate Program Approved Course Listing, or approved equivalent. Notwithstanding the above, students must fulfill the department's MSc program requirements as approved and stated in the department's graduate program requirements.

For Students transferring into the PhD program from a MSc program, credit for approved courses taken during the MSc program will be transferred to the PhD program on recommendation of the Supervisor and Supervisory Committee. Students should transfer within two years of their MSc program on the recommendation of the Supervisor and Supervisory Committee, by submitting a PhD proposal package to the Graduate Coordinator for the MSGPC to review. Note that when a student transfers from a MSc to a PhD program, the residency requirement is considered to be cumulative (i.e. the beginning of the MSc program is now applicable to the PhD program).

### **ASSESSMENT OF PhD PROPOSAL PACKAGES**

To ensure the quality of a Student's program, MSGPC assesses the following four key attributes of a successful graduate program:

1. The Student's background and readiness.
2. The Supervisor and research environment.
3. The Supervisory Committee and their contributions to the development of the Student.
4. The scope, rigor and quality of the research project.

These four attributes are addressed in the PhD proposal package that the Student submits to MSGPC.

The Medical Sciences Graduate Programs Committee reviews the curriculum vitae information of the Supervisor and Supervisory Committee members, and assesses whether all members are appropriate to support the Student and his/her research, based on the recommendation of the Graduate Coordinator of that Department.

The Supervisor is also assessed carefully, giving special consideration to the research environment, funding, accessibility and all other aspects mentioned above in "Responsibilities of the Supervisor."

An expert Subcommittee reviews the Student's PhD proposal, and assesses the quality, scope and its potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge in that area of research. This Subcommittee will consist of a member of the MSGPC and at least one external member with appropriate expertise.

The Medical Sciences Graduate Program Committee (MSGPC) requests the proposal package consist of the information below, in the following order:

1. Student's academic record, both U of A transcripts and other institutions if applicable.
2. The [proposal form](#) must be completed stating:
  - Supervisory Committee Members.
  - Project Title.
  - Student's completed and proposed coursework.
  - Project's source of funding, including the name, duration and amount.
  - Supervisor's source of funding, including the name, duration and amount.
  - Student Publications.
  - Student Honours and Awards.
  - Timeline of the PhD program, indicating supervisory committee meetings, proposed month of the candidacy examination and final oral examination.
3. A statement (maximum 200 words), written by the supervisor, outlining the potential contribution to science of the student's PhD project.
4. A proposal outlining the scope of the proposed research, using the following guidelines and including:
  - A written proposal which does not exceed four (4) pages (not including appendices), single spaced, size 12 Times New Roman font, and 1" or 2.5 cm margins. The proposal,
    - Must be written independently by the student
    - Must clearly and precisely illustrate the students role in the proposed research
  - Appendices should be restricted to figures, legends, references, questionnaires and tables
  - A sign-off page with the Supervisor, Supervisory Committee members and Departmental Graduate Coordinators' signatures approving the proposal

As a general guideline, the proposal will contain:

- a review of the pertinent literature
- the research hypothesis
- the specific objectives of the research

- a review of the relevant work done previously by the student or the research group on the subject
  - a detailed presentation of the planned experimental approach, and
  - the significance of the anticipated results.
  -
5. NEW: A description (< 1 page) explaining the student's individual role/contributions in the PhD research project, i.e.: leadership in experimental design, data collection, manuscript preparation/authorship, etc.

**Please Note:** Anything exceeding these guidelines will be returned to the student and not be included for review.

6. Curriculum vitae form for the supervisor and/or co-supervisor must be submitted on the common CV format with a maximum of 6 pages.

The information in the PhD proposal package will help the MSGPC to assess the:

1. Student's background and readiness
2. Supervisor and research environment
3. Supervisory Committee and his/her contributions to the development of the Student
4. Scope, rigor and quality of the research project.

If the Committee approves the proposal, the Graduate Coordinator, Supervisor and Student are notified in writing and the Student is then eligible to proceed with the candidacy examination. If the Committee has concerns about any aspect of the proposal package, further clarification will be requested.

Proposals submitted must be accompanied by a **list of 5 potential reviewers outside the Student's department in a sealed envelope**. This information is to be supplied by the Department Graduate Coordinator and will not be accepted if brought by the Student unless it is in a sealed envelope signed by the Graduate Coordinator.

Submit an original paper copy of the PhD Proposal Package including CVs to:

MSGPC, Office of Research  
Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry  
2-13 HMRC  
(780) 492-9721  
fmdgrd@ualberta.ca