

School of Health Administration Dalhousie University

Master of Health Administration Thesis Stream

Student Handbook 2025-2026

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Purpose of This Handbook

This Handbook describes the Thesis Stream specific to Master of Health Administration (MHA) students in the School of Health Administration (SHA), Faculty of Health, Dalhousie University. A Master's thesis should be considered a work of team scholarship between a student and a research supervisor/committee. MHA students considering or enrolled in the Thesis Stream should consult this Handbook for procedures related to the Thesis Stream.

This Handbook complements but does not replace FGS regulations and information. Please see FGS policies and procedures for students, supervisors, and Schools outlined in the [Dalhousie Academic Calendars - View Calendar](#). Please refer to the FGS website ([Current students | Faculty of Graduate Studies | Dalhousie University](#)) for formatting and submitting of your thesis.

Why Should I Consider the MHA Thesis Stream?

MHA Thesis Stream students enter a supportive research environment and a mentoring relationship, to gain valuable research experience. Completing an MHA thesis can have beneficial career implications:

- A master's thesis is an asset for entry-level health administration and management opportunities where research education and experience are required.
- For mid-career health professionals who have not previously completed research-intensive training, completing a master's thesis can support more effective use of evidence in decision making and practice, as well as management of research activities within a larger health administration portfolio.
- A thesis-based master's can be a step towards advanced research training as an independent investigator (e.g., PhD and/or postdoctoral fellowships).
- Many senior manager and directorial positions in the health sector now consider PhD training a requirement or asset.

Key Things I Need to Know and Consider Before Applying to the Thesis Stream

- Students in the Thesis Stream add a research project to the coursework component of their program. While there are some differences in the coursework component, there is not a significant decrease in the number of courses. For this reason, thesis Stream students should expect to register for an additional 1-2 semesters/terms. They can also expect to pay a continuing fee for each additional term that they register.
- There are limited places each year for Thesis Stream students. The number of places is dependent on the availability of faculty members. Where demand exceeds capacity, not all applicants will be offered a place in the Thesis Stream. Those interested in the Thesis Stream should contact core faculty members of the School early in the fall of first year to inquire about potential research projects for their master's thesis.
- Students may enroll in the MHA thesis stream at the start of the program if they receive external funding that requires a thesis-based program, or they may opt in within the first three months of their studies.
- Students in the Thesis Stream are expected to be full-time students. Only in very exceptional circumstances can part-time students enter the Thesis Stream. Similarly, only in exceptional circumstances will joint degree students (such as the JD/MHA or PharmD/MHA students)

enter the Thesis Stream. Because the Thesis Stream is associated with the MHA portion of the joint degree, students should expect to complete projects relevant to health administration.

MHA Thesis Stream Curriculum

MHA THESIS STREAM

YEAR 1 TERM 1/FALL		YEAR 1 TERM 2/WINTER		YEAR 1 TERM 3/SUMMER
IPHE 5900	Interprofessional Health Education Portfolio	IPHE 5900	Interprofessional Health Education Portfolio	HESA 6390 Residency Four-month residency
HESA 6370	Canadian and International Health Systems	HESA 5320	Epidemiology and Population Health	
HESA 5330	Management & Design of Healthcare Organizations	HESA 5341	Healthcare Economics: Evaluation & Policy	
HESA 6360	Healthcare Law	HESA 9000	Thesis (0 credits)	
HESA 5345	Accounting and Financial Management in Healthcare	HESA 5335	Information Systems & Project Management for Health Administration	
HESA 6505	Statistics for Health Administration	HESA 5505	Strategy and Change Leadership in Health Systems	
YEAR 2 TERM 1/FALL		YEAR 2 TERM 2/ WINTER <small>(If required; will incur payment of continuing fee)</small>		YEAR 2 TERM 3/SUMMER <small>(If required; will incur payment of continuing fee)</small>
IPHE 5900	Interprofessional Health Education Portfolio	IPHE 5900	Interprofessional Health Education Portfolio	HESA 9000 Thesis (0 credits)
XXXXXXXX	Research course (3 credit hours)	HESA 9000	Thesis (0 credits)	
XXXXXXXX	Research course (3 credit hours)			
HESA 6340	Human Resources in Healthcare			
HESA 9000	Thesis (0 credits)			

How Do I Apply for the Thesis Stream?

MHA thesis stream students enroll in all required first-semester MHA courses. To proceed with the thesis stream, students must identify a research-intensive faculty member from the School of Health Administration who agrees to serve as their thesis supervisor. Thesis stream students are required to submit a letter to the Thesis Coordinator by December 10, outlining their proposed research topic and confirming their supervisor's support.

Project and Thesis Supervisor

A master's thesis should be considered a work of team scholarship between a student and a research supervisor/committee. It is important that the project you undertake builds on your scientific and health training background, any professional qualification you hold, and your scholarly interests and career plans.

You are encouraged to contact faculty to learn more details regarding their program of research and to assess the match between 1) your career goals and 2) your own learning style and the mentoring style of the project supervisor.

Important Dates and Milestones

Date	Action
Fall term Year 1: September - December	
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students considering applying to the Thesis Stream should:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Attend the Thesis Stream Information session held during orientation weekReview available faculty member's research program/topics on the School's website and read some of their publicationsMake an appointment and meet with available supervisors to learn more about available projects to assess the match with their background, career goals and learning style.
December 10	Student has identified Supervisor and research topic: NOTE: Final admission will be contingent on successful completion of all fall courses.
December 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Student will receive confirmation of acceptance or denial into the Thesis stream
December 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students in the Thesis Stream register in HESA 9000 rather than HESA 5350 Management Control & Funding Systems.Students must be continuously registered in each term for HESA 9000 for the remainder of their program.
Winter Term Year 1: January - April	
Early January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">First official meeting between student and supervisor.Student and Supervisor will discuss members (2) to serve on the Supervisory Committee. As per the Academic Calendar FGS Regulation 9.3 'Supervisory Committees are selected by the

	<p>supervisor in consultation with the student.’ All members of the supervisory committee are Regular, Adjunct (Retired), Adjunct (FGS), or Adjunct (Scholars) members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. At least one of the members of the Supervisory Committee is from the student’s graduate academic unit (not including the Supervisor).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student begins work on thesis proposal. • Supervisor approaches potential Supervisory Committee members
February – March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisory Committee members confirmed • Student and supervisor determine which research courses are to be taken in the fall of second year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOTE: if ethics approval is required, submission for ethics review prior to Residency is recommended. 	
Summer Term Year 1: May-August	
<p>Summer Residency: The Residency is required for all Thesis Stream MHA students. This is a management, not a research, Residency. However, the Residency may be in a location that provides the student with content knowledge relevant for the thesis. Student and thesis Supervisor should determine the type and frequency of contact/meetings (if any) during the summer semester.</p>	
Fall Term Year 2: September – December	
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student submits written thesis proposal to Supervisory Committee and for ethics review (if required). This fully developed thesis proposal is expected to be at least 10 pages.
Sept-December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete MHA course work and selected research courses. Continue to work on proposal/data collection etc. Where ethics approval is required, data collection cannot begin until ethics approval has been received.
Winter Term Year 2: January – April	
<p>NOTE: MHA coursework is typically completed as per timelines for the program and students register in Winter term for thesis only</p>	
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student registers for thesis continuation (<i>continuing fees will apply</i>). Continue full time work on thesis until complete. • The student should review the FGS website (Current students Faculty of Graduate Studies Dalhousie University), for information about how to format and submit their thesis.
February/March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisor to determine who will be the External Examiner. The student will be advised of who the External Examiner is following approval from the Thesis Stream Coordinator and/or Director and upon acceptance of the External Examiner to take on this role.

Summer Term Year 2: May-August (if required)	
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student registers for thesis continuation (<i>continuing fees will apply</i>).
<p>NOTE:</p> <p>-The student will register <u>each term</u> for thesis continuation until the thesis defence has been completed.</p> <p>-Continuing fees for international students is applied at the international fee rate https://www.dal.ca/admissions/money_matters/tuition_payments/Tuition_Fees/International_Students.html</p> <p>https://academiccalendar.dal.ca/Catalog/ViewCatalog.aspx?pageid=viewcatalog&catalogid=136&chapterid=9319&topicgroupid=41028&loaduseredits=False</p> <p>-All theses must be submitted to FGS for format review prior to final submission</p>	

All things Committee Related

Supervisory and Thesis Examination Committee membership	
Supervisory Committee - membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One Supervisor or two co-supervisors• Two other members who hold FGS membership, at least one of whom is from the student's graduate academic unit.
Thesis Examination Committee - membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chair (1) The Chair must have Regular FGS membership and will be either the School Graduate Program Coordinator or Director.• Supervisory Committee (3 members)• External Examiner (1)
External Examiner	
6 weeks prior to Thesis Examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The student will be advised of who the external examiner is at least 6 weeks prior to the Thesis Examination• The student is required to submit their thesis to their Supervisor at least 4 weeks prior to the Thesis Examination for submission to and review by the External Examiner
4 weeks prior to Thesis Examination	
External Examiner Responsibilities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The External Examiner is advised to provide a short one-page report highlighting main comments about the thesis to the Supervisory Committee and the student at least one week prior to the Thesis Examination.	

Thesis Examination Format

Thesis Examination Format is in alignment with FGS Regulation 10.3.2 (3) in the Academic Calendar	
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student will present for approximately 20 minutes
Examination Committee Question Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order of Questioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -External Examiner -Supervisory Committee members -Primary Supervisor -If time permits, questions from the audience may be allowed before the <i>in camera</i> session • Typically, two or more rounds of questioning will occur
In Camera Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student leaves the room, and the Examination Committee holds in-camera deliberation. • Upon completion of the <i>in-camera</i> session the student will be asked by the Chair to return to the room for the Examination Committee's decision. The Chair will inform the student of that decision.
Examination Committee Reporting of Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision of the Examination Committee are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) approved as submitted, (b) approved upon specific correction with a clear timetable for completion, normally within one month, or (c) rejected. <p>If rejected, the Committee may recommend that the student be allowed to re-submit a revised thesis for re-examination.</p>
Chair, Examination Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair, Examination Committee will submit a written report within 72 hours of the defence to the Director (or Graduate Coordinator) with a copy to the Supervisor regarding the defence outcome. • Report template available from mgrsha@dal.ca