

**School of Health Administration
Dalhousie University**

**Master of Health Administration
Thesis Stream**

**Student Handbook
2024-2025**

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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, students are highly unlikely to complete their research project within the 16 months of the MHA. 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.
- Because the MHA Thesis Stream curriculum differs from the Non-Thesis Stream, the Thesis Stream curriculum has not been evaluated and is not accredited by CAHME.
- 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. Information about the number of places will be provided to students early in the fall term.

- The topics/projects offered will depend on faculty availability and expertise and will vary each year. The available topics/projects will be provided to students early in the fall term. During the application process, students will be required to indicate and rank their interest in the available projects.
- 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	

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YEAR 2 TERM 1/FALL		YEAR 2 TERM 2/ WINTER (If required; will incur payment of continuing fee)		YEAR 2 TERM 3/SUMMER (If required; will incur payment of continuing fee)
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?

Application to the Thesis Stream is via an expression of interest (EOI) (see Appendix A). Interested students should complete and submit the EOI along with a sample of your writing to the Administrative Manager (mgrsha@dal.ca) by October 30 of the students' first year in the MHA program. Applications will be reviewed by the Thesis Stream Admissions Committee who will recommend successful applicants to the MHA Graduate Coordinator and Director for final approval. Successful applicants will be informed of their project and supervisor by December 10th of their first semester. Admission into the Thesis Stream is contingent on successful completion of all fall courses. Please see Page 4 and 5 for a detailed timeline.

Applicants will be assessed using the following criteria:

- Current and previous academic merit (transcripts on file will be used – students do not need to submit transcripts).
- Writing sample (for example a previous publication, assignment or report).
- Depth and breadth of previous research experience (based on EOI).
- Match between project, previous experience, and future career goals (based on EOI).
- Willingness of supervisor to provide supervision.

Project and Thesis Supervisor

As previously noted, 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.

The EOI process requires you to select and rank projects available in the year you apply. Projects outside those listed will not be considered. You are welcome and encouraged to contact available project supervisors to learn more details of the project and to assess the match

between 1) the available projects and 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"> • Information regarding available projects and supervisors will be provided to interested students.
September – October	<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 week ○ Review information regarding available projects and supervisors ○ Review available faculty member’s research program/topics on the School’s website and read some of their publications ○ Make 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.
October 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline to submit EOI to Thesis Stream Admissions Committee via the School Administrative Manager (mgrsha@dal.ca)
December 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application. • Successful applicants will be informed of their assigned project and supervisor. • Final admission will be contingent on successful completion of all fall courses.
December 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline to confirm acceptance of an offer to complete the Thesis Stream. • 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 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). • 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	
NOTE: MHA coursework is typically completed as per timelines for the program and students register in Winter term for thesis only	
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student registers for thesis continuation (continuing fees will apply). 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 (continuing fees will apply).
<p>NOTE: The student will register <u>each term</u> for thesis continuation until the thesis defence has been completed.</p> <p>NOTE: 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"> • Supervisor • 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
4 weeks prior to Thesis Examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
External Examiner Responsibilities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The External Examiner is required 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

APPENDIX A:
Expression of Interest for MHA Thesis Stream
To be completed by student and submitted by October 30th
submit to: Beth Weir (mgrsha@dal.ca)

1. Name (last, first)		
2. Current MHA program (MHA, JD/MHA, PharmD/MHA. etc.) <i>NOTE: only in exceptional circumstances will students in joint programs be admitted to the Thesis Stream.</i>		
3. Current status (full-time; part-time) <i>NOTE: only in exceptional circumstances will part-time students be admitted to the Thesis Stream.</i>		
4. List, in order of your preference, the projects that interest you. You may list as many or as few as you wish.		
5. Describe why each of the projects you have listed are of interest to you, and how they will contribute to your career goals.		
6. What is your background in research to date?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<p>I have completed a major research project/paper at the undergraduate level.</p> <p>I have completed a research project/paper as part of a health professional (entry-to-practice) degree, at the undergraduate or graduate level.</p> <p>I have completed a graduate thesis, defined as a work of supervised independent scholarship in a thesis-based graduate program.</p> <p>I have worked as a Research Assistant / Research Associate or similar.</p> <p>I have carried out or supervised research activities and/or research students in previous work settings.</p>

7. If you have ticked 'Yes' to any of the boxes in item 5, please provide details of at least one specific project.	
8. Please attach a sample of your writing (for example a previous publication, assignment or report)	
9. Describe how a Master's thesis will contribute to your short and long term career goals.	
<p>I understand that the coursework for the Thesis Stream differs from that of the Non-thesis Stream and that it has not been formally accredited by CAHME.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Signature</p>	

APPENDIX B:
Description of Available Thesis Stream Project
To be completed by supervisor
Complete one form per project and submit to
Thesis Stream Coordinator

Project/Topic Title	
Project Supervisor	
Brief Description of Project to be Undertaken by Thesis Student	
Brief Description of the Research Context (team members, funding, related projects)	
Role and Contribution of the Thesis Student	
Add any additional information for Thesis Student.	