



Department of Oceanography

Graduate Student Handbook

Prepared by

Departmental Graduate Student Oversight Committee

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Disclaimer: The guidelines provided in this handbook do not, and cannot, supersede the requirements listed in the rules and regulations published in the annually updated Dalhousie University Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) Academic Calendar. This document stipulates FGS and the Department of Oceanography regulations and requirements that students must meet to complete a graduate degree program in Oceanography. In the event of a real or perceived conflict in such stipulations, the FGS regulations and requirements shall prevail.

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1 GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

This list explains acronyms and special terms used in this document.

- Candidate: a graduate student enrolled in an MSc or PhD research program.
- FGS: Faculty of Graduate Studies; “FGS §” notations in this document refer to sections found on the FGS website and the annually updated FGS Academic Calendar.
- CRN: Course Registration Number; see the Dalhousie Academic Timetable.
- A course offered over one term (i.e. Fall term) is considered a half credit course equal to three credit hours. A course offered over two terms (i.e. Fall and Winter terms) is considered one full credit course equal to six credit hours.
- DalOnline: the online gateway system for student-university interaction.
- NSERC: Natural Science and Engineering Research Council (Canada).
- Regular faculty (FGS), Adjunct (FGS), Adjunct (Retired) and Adjunct (Scholar) refer to FGS membership categories defined by FGS.
- “External” in this document refers to a person among four different contexts:
 1. For the Qualifying Examination (QE), “external” refers to a regular Oceanography faculty member outside the sub-discipline(s) of the QE Candidate. If a faculty member is a part of two sub-disciplines, that faculty member may not serve as the External Examiner for a QE arranged in either sub-discipline.
 2. For the MSc thesis defence, “external” refers to a person who is not or has not been a member of the Candidate’s Advisory Committee. The person may be a regular departmental faculty member, a faculty member from another department, or an Adjunct (FGS, Retired, Scholar) as defined by FGS.
 3. For the PhD proposal defence the “external” refers to a person who is or has not been a member of the Candidate’s Advisory Committee. The person may be a regular departmental faculty member, a faculty member from another department, or an Adjunct (FGS, Retired, Scholar) as defined by FGS.
 4. For the PhD thesis defence, the “external examiner” is a person external to Dalhousie University who is not associated with the Candidate, their Advisor(s), or their research, and is appointed by FGS at the recommendation of the Department of Oceanography. FGS sets the regulations on the nature and appointment of the External Examiner (FGS §10.5.1; Appointment of External Examiner).

2 GENERAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

2.01 Registration

[1] Graduate Candidates must maintain their registration for all academic terms of their program, except in cases where a formal Leave of Absence has been approved by FGS. Registration involves registering for a “course” named “Registration Course–Graduate” (designated REGN 9999, and also called a “fee-generating course”), as well as either MSc “Master’s Thesis” (OCEA 9000) or PhD “Doctoral Thesis” (OCEA 9530); see FGS website for details, including the relevant CRN. It is critical that Candidates register for these courses on time. Failure to register at least one month prior to the beginning of a term may affect payment of scholarships and stipends.

[2] Candidates who fail to register within the set deadlines will be considered to have lapsed registration, will not be permitted to submit a thesis, and will not receive services from the University during a lapsed academic term. Candidates who allow their registration to lapse are, by default, considered to have withdrawn and will be required to apply for reinstatement if they wish to continue in the program (FGS §5; Registration Procedures and Regulations).

2.02 Leave of Absence

[1] Some circumstances might require a student to request a leave of absence (LOA) from their program; this may include parental and medical leaves (FGS §5.8; Leave of Absence and Parental Leave). In such cases, an application must be submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies with approval from the student's Advisor(s) and the Graduate Coordinator prior to the term for which the leave is to take effect. Important considerations such as funding and status may involve coordination with external agencies and other support services at Dalhousie. Students are encouraged to explore the Faculty of Graduate Studies website and contact the Department for further information and resources available to students. International students are also advised to contact the International Centre to speak with an Advisor if applying for a leave of absence.

2.03 Work Schedule and Vacation

[1] Schedules and hours may fluctuate but students are generally expected to dedicate full-time hours to their graduate studies, which can exceed the convention of 40 hours per week. At times, the scope of this work may also include evenings and weekends. Students are encouraged to speak with their Advisor(s) if experiencing difficulty with this workload.

[2] In addition to the holidays Dalhousie recognizes throughout the year, students are entitled to two weeks of vacation (10 business days). The Department does not track vacation time; this is coordination by students and their Advisor(s). Students are encouraged to plan in advance to avoid scheduling conflicts and missing important deadlines, and to seek the approval from their Advisor(s) in advance of planning vacation.

2.04 Courses

[1] In addition to REGN 9999, Candidates enrol in conventional courses, chosen in consultation with their Advisor(s) and pursuant to the requirements set out in **4.01** or **5.01** below for MSc and PhD Candidates, respectively.

[2] Department of Oceanography graduate courses are designated as "core" or "non-core." The core courses are Geological Oceanography (OCEA 5110; GO), Physical Oceanography (OCEA 5120; PO), Chemical Oceanography (OCEA 5130; CO), and Biological Oceanography (OCEA 5140; BO). Together they are designed to help Candidates gain a broad understanding of the major sub-disciplines in oceanography. Core courses are offered each year, typically with PO and CO in the Fall term and GO and BO in the Winter term. These courses are cross-listed to 4th year undergraduate courses and there are circumstances in which a Candidate may apply for advanced placement credits if they have already completed the cross-listed course (see **4.01** or **5.01** below). Advanced placement credits are dealt with by FGS on a case by case basis (FGS §3.3.7; Rules and Guidelines for Advanced Placement). If a request for advanced placement credits for one or more courses is approved, this does not reduce the overall credit hours required for a student's respective degree program.

[3] Non-core courses tend to be more advanced and specialized and not all are offered each year. Details of offerings are available online.

[4] Graduate students must register for the 5000-level stream of any courses that are cross-listed at the 4000 level (see **4.01** or **5.01** for notes regarding 4000-level courses completed previously) prior to the registration deadline. See the FGS Academic Calendar for deadlines.

[5] A Graduate Student Program Form must be submitted to the departmental Graduate Coordinator within one month of the start of the program. Graduate Student Program Forms are available on the FGS website. Failure to submit a Graduate Student Program Form within the stated timeline can result in additional fees for courses not included in the program requirements and may affect the ability of the Candidate to graduate (see **2.07** below).

[6] All Dalhousie graduate students must achieve a grade of B- or higher in all courses required as part of their degree program (FGS §7; Degree Requirements). The only graduate course grade assigned below “B-” is “F”. Any Candidate who receives an F grade will be withdrawn from their graduate program. Such a Candidate may apply for reinstatement (FGS §5.4.1; Reinstatement of Students). Reinstatement must be supported by the Graduate Coordinator and approved in writing by FGS. If reinstated, any subsequent “F” will result in a final program dismissal. Academic withdrawals and reinstatements are recorded on official transcripts.

[7] Courses approved by the Advisory Committee may be taken at other universities as part of the Candidate’s degree program, provided the course is not available at Dalhousie (FGS §7.6.6; Letters of Permission). A Letter of Permission (available on the FGS website), must be completed and submitted to the Graduate Coordinator in advance of the non-Dalhousie course enrolment.

2.05 Thesis Proposal

[1] See sections **4.02** and **5.03** for requirements in the MSc and PhD programs, respectively.

2.06 Sea Time

[1] The Department of Oceanography has a tradition of requiring graduate students to acquire sea-going research experience as part of their degree requirements and to meet several objectives:

- It exposes Candidates of all backgrounds and research interests to the rewards and challenges of sea-going research.
- It offers the opportunity to network with other scientists in a unique and stimulating environment.
- It provides a practical education on how to solve problems that arise when outside assistance is not readily at hand.

[2] By convention, “sea time” means an extended period at sea conducting active research. Arrangements to meet the sea time requirement are the responsibility of the Candidate in consultation with their Advisor(s). Financial costs associated with gaining sea time experience should be borne by a combination of the Advisor(s), a travel grant, or an outside investigator or agency. Candidates are required to submit a Sea Time Form (available in the Oceanography Office) to the Graduate Secretary after completion of the requirement. The departmental Curriculum Committee must approve the completed Sea Time Form.

[3] In a limited set of extenuating circumstances, Candidates may have the sea time requirement waived or replaced with commensurate experience. For example, Candidates facing physical- or mental-health challenges to working at sea, Candidates with extensive experience in sea-going research, or Candidates with demanding nearshore/intertidal field research may be granted a waiver. To apply for a waiver, the Candidate must write to the Curriculum Committee stating the reason for their request and propose a commensurate replacement experience. An accompanying letter, signed by the Advisory Committee, supporting the Candidate's request must be provided to the Curriculum Committee by the Advisor(s). The decision to grant or deny a sea time waiver is the responsibility of the Curriculum Committee.

2.07 Seminars

[1] Candidates are required to attend general departmental seminars and to attend and participate in the specialty seminars in their field of study or sub-discipline accordingly. Candidates who are unable to attend seminars regularly must have the specific agreement of their Advisory Committee that this requirement is waived and this must be communicated to the Graduate Secretary and the Chair of the Curriculum Committee in a written memo signed by the Advisor(s) and appended to the Candidate's departmental file.

2.08 Status

[1] Any change in graduate student status, such as transfer from MSc to PhD (see **4.05** below), a leave of absence, or entrance to another degree program must be recommended to the Graduate Oversight Committee by the Advisory Committee. Approval is made by the Graduate Oversight Committee that is required to review such requests. Candidates must consult the Graduate Secretary regarding the required documentation.

2.09 Annual Progress Report

[1] FGS regulations require Candidates to submit an Annual Progress Report one month prior to the anniversary of their admission date. Failure to submit this report may result in delays in registration and funding. The report is submitted by the Candidate through DalOnline with subsequent online prompting for the Advisor and then the Graduate Coordinator to approve. The online reporting system has an unreliable history; Candidates are strongly advised to check their report status subsequent to submission.

[2] Candidates must also submit an Oceanography Supplementary Program Report Form each year (typically by early May). The form is available from the Graduate Secretary. The form documents annual Candidate accomplishments in a more detailed manner than typically provided in a CV. Candidates are advised to keep this information and their detailed and summary CVs up-to-date.

2.10 Time Limits for Completion of a Degree

[1] FGS sets the maximum period for the completion of a graduate program; MSc - 4 years, and PhD - 6 years (FGS §7.1; Maximum Time for Degree Completion and Extensions). Extensions may be granted by FGS if recommended by the Graduate Oversight Committee.

3 SUPERVISION

[1] FGS stipulates the regulations and guidelines for the Advisor(s) and the Advisory Committee (FGS §9; Thesis Supervisors and Supervisory Committees). Please note whether it be an MSc or PhD Advisory Committee, “regular members should constitute no less than 50% of the membership”. In addition, the Department of Oceanography imposes the following requirements:

1. The Advisory Committee shall be formed within the first term of the Candidate’s entry into their academic program.
2. MSc Advisory Committees must have 3 or more members.
3. PhD Advisory Committees must have 4 or more members.
4. Advisory Committees must have at least one member from outside the research sub-discipline(s) of the Candidate. This member outside the research sub-discipline can be an individual with Adjunct Scholar or Adjunct FGS status. If the composition of the Advisory Committee does not follow the requirement for a member outside the research sub-discipline, the Graduate Coordinator (after discussion with the GOC member from the student's discipline) will request modification. Final approval of the committee membership rests with the GOC.
5. Advisory Committees (or a quorum set by the Committee) and the Candidate shall meet at least twice per academic year.
6. Advisory Committee approval should be sought on significant milestones to be reached by the Candidate; e.g., transfer from MSc to PhD, thesis defence, etc.
7. Candidates or Advisor(s) must provide hard-copy minutes of each meeting, signed by the Candidate and Advisor(s), to the Graduate Secretary within one week subsequent to the meeting.

4 MSC PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

4.01 MSc Course Requirements

[1] The minimum course requirements are:

“Students must complete OCEA 5001.03 and an additional 6 credit hours from core courses (OCEA 5110.03- OCEA 5140.03). Students who have previously taken core courses at the undergraduate level (OCEA 4110.03- OCEA 4140.03) with minimum grade of A may choose to take alternative graduate courses to meet the additional 6 credit hour requirement. Students who have completed comparable content as part of a Master’s at another university should contact their supervisor and the graduate coordinator in their first term to discuss possible core course substitutions (advanced standing) or reductions to the required credit hours (advanced placement).”
 [Graduate Studies 2022/2023 > Oceanography > Master of Science (MSc); May 2022].

Additional courses may be required to strengthen a student’s background.

The requirements for additional courses (if any) are set by the Advisor(s).

[2] Previous courses taken internally or externally to Dalhousie may or may not be suitable for advanced placement and each must be dealt with by FGS on a case-by-case basis. Candidates wishing to request advanced placement credits for courses completed as part of a previous degree program

must have the support of the Graduate Coordinator as well as FGS approval (FGS §3.7; Advanced Placement).

4.02 MSc Thesis Proposal

[1] MSc Candidates are expected to produce an approved thesis proposal within one year of enrolment in their programs. The proposal should provide a well-reasoned research summary and a description of a course of action, not an exhaustive literature review nor a deeply detailed description of the methods. The proposal, outlining the scope of the research (such that the research can be completed within one year) should be no more than 15 pages of double-spaced text including figures, tables and literature cited. The proposal should be developed in consultation with the Advisor(s) and the Advisory Committee.

[2] At the discretion of the Advisory Committee, a Candidate may be required to defend their thesis proposal, normally conducted during an Advisory Committee meeting.

[3] If a defence is required, the Advisor(s) will notify the Graduate Secretary that the requirement has been satisfied.

[4] The Candidate will provide the Graduate Secretary with a copy of the approved proposal, signed by the Candidate and the Advisor(s). The approved proposal will be appended to the Candidate's departmental file.

4.03 MSc Thesis and Defence

[1] FGS provides the regulations and guidelines for MSc thesis requirements (FGS §10; Thesis Regulations). The Department of Oceanography imposes additional requirements:

1. A quorum of the Advisory Committee must approve the thesis prior to defence scheduling.
2. Readers are normally drawn from the Advisory Committee, although another person may be selected in the case of serious scheduling conflicts.
3. The defence is chaired by the Graduate Coordinator or their designate who is a regular Oceanography faculty member but not a member the Advisory Committee.
4. The Examining Committee must contain a member who is not within the Candidate's sub-discipline. If that member of the Advisory Committee (see **3,04.** above) is not available for the defence, another reader from outside the Candidate's sub-discipline must be selected.
5. In exceptional cases, arrangements may be made for remote participation in the thesis defence by some members of the examining committee, excluding the Advisor(s).

[2] It is the responsibility of the Advisor(s) to select the Examining Committee members, according to the guidelines above. The short-term absence of members of the Advisory Committee is not sufficient reason to schedule a defence in violation of the above guidelines.

[3] The thesis defence is open to all members of the Department of Oceanography and other interested parties. Notices of the thesis defence, including an abstract, will be posted and distributed by the Graduate Secretary to all members of the Department of Oceanography.

[4] Following the defence, the Chair of the Examining Committee will submit a report of the defence outcome to the Graduate Secretary indicating the nature of any changes to be made in the thesis

and the time frame within which they are to be completed. In the event of an unsuccessful defence, an explanation of the outcome must be provided in the report. A copy of the report must be provided to the Candidate, the Advisor(s) and the members of the Examining Committee and it will be appended to the Candidate's departmental file.

4.04 MSc Thesis Defence Timeline

[1] Prior to proceeding with scheduling the defence, the thesis should be distributed to the Advisor(s) and Advisory Committee for review and final approval. The timeline is as follows:

- Four weeks prior to defence:
 - Have the thesis format reviewed and approved by FGS.
 - Submit the MSc Defence Form to the Graduate Secretary.
 - Submit an electronic copy of the abstract to the Graduate Secretary.
 - Provide copies of the thesis to the Advisor and the Advisory Committee.
 - Notify the Graduate Secretary, who will arrange any audiovisual or remote-participation requirements and secure a venue for the defence.
- Ten working days prior to defence:
 - Submit hard-copy of the thesis to the Graduate Secretary for public display in the Oceanography Department Office.
- Following a successful Defence:
 - Have the Examining Committee members sign the FGS signature form.
 - Submit required changes to the Advisor(s) within the timeline set out following the defence.
 - Have FGS approve the final format.
 - Electronically submit the final PDF-file version of the thesis via DalSpace.
 - Submit various completed forms to FGS. These may include a digital deposit to Theses Canada, Library and Archives Canada, a Signature page with original signatures, etc. Since these tend to change over time, Candidates should consult FGS for details.
 - Submit a Thesis Binding Submission Form and payment to the Graduate Secretary. Submit final copies of the thesis to the Graduate Secretary for binding.
 - Complete the FGS Exit Survey.

4.05 Transfers to PhD

[1] FGS provides regulations and guidelines for Advisor(s) and Advisory Committees regarding transfer from the MSc to PhD program (FGS §3.3.1; Regulations). Candidates wishing to transfer must provide a one-page letter to their Advisory Committee stating the reason for the transfer and justification that they are qualified to embark on the PhD program. The Advisory Committee must meet to consider the transfer request, and if approved, a letter from the Advisor(s), noting the date of Advisory Committee approval and the justification for the transfer must be submitted to the Graduate Secretary for subsequent approval by the Graduate Oversight Committee. If approved, the Candidate must complete and submit a Graduate Student Program Update Form (FGS; Forms and Documents).

[2] Please note, from time to time, Qualifying Examinations may be used to assess the transfer of a student from a Master's to a Doctoral program before the procedure for a transfer request has

been initiated (FGS §8.8.2; Regulations). However, in such cases, the student must have completed the core course requirements for the doctoral program.

5 PHD PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

5.01 PhD Course Requirements

[1] The minimum course requirements are:

“Students must complete 12 credit hours of graduate OCEA courses. Of the 12 credit hours, 9 credit hours must be selected from core courses (OCEA 5110.03- OCEA 5140.03) unless previously taken at the undergraduate level (OCEA 4110.03- OCEA 4140.03) with minimum grade of A. OCEA 5001.03 cannot be used towards the 12 credit hour requirements of the PhD degree. Students who previously completed the undergraduate level core courses with the required minimum grade will complete an equivalent number of credit hours of graduate OCEA electives to meet the 12 credit hour degree requirements. Graduate electives from other subject areas may be approved by the graduate coordinator. Students who have completed core courses or OCEA electives at the graduate level at Dalhousie either as part of a completed Master’s or prior to transferring into the PhD may have these courses counted towards their PhD credit hour requirements, reducing the remaining number of courses required in the PhD. Students who have completed comparable content as part of a Master’s at another university should contact their supervisor and the graduate coordinator in their first term to discuss possible core course substitutions (advanced standing) or reductions to the required credit hours (advanced placement)....”

[Graduate Studies 2022/2023 > Oceanography > Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); May 2022].

Additional courses may be required to strengthen a student’s background.

In addition to the above noted course requirements, students must write and defend a proposal for thesis research. Research and completion of a thesis are required.

The requirements for additional courses (if any) are set by the Advisor(s).

[2] Previous courses taken internally or externally to Dalhousie may or may not be suitable for advanced placement and must be dealt with by FGS on a case-by-case basis. Candidates requesting advanced placement credits for courses completed as part of a previous degree program must have the support of the Graduate Coordinator as well as FGS approval (FGS §3.3.7; Advanced Placement).

5.02 PhD Qualifying Exam

[1] The PhD Qualifying Exam (QE) is an oral exam based on a ‘reading list’ tailored to the general research interests of the Candidate. The exam is neither a mini-proposal defence nor a pre-proposal exercise. It is designed to assess the ability of the Candidate to read, understand, and communicate to the examiners the content, meaning and relevance of reading-list papers in relation to their chosen field of research.

[2] The QE is a departmental, sub-discipline process and is not an Advisory Committee process. The Department delegates the administration of the QE to regular faculty in the sub-discipline(s) of the Candidate. If the Candidate is co-advised by an FGS-defined Adjunct or a cross-listed Dalhousie regular faculty member, then the co-advisor may also participate.

In some cases, an Advisory Committee may argue that a student’s research falls within two or more of the traditional sub-disciplines and may request, in writing, with justification, that a multidisciplinary QE be conducted. If the Graduate Oversight Committee (GOC) approves the Advisory Committee’s request, the GOC will organize the multidisciplinary QE, and arrange representatives from at least three sub-disciplines.

[3] The QE should be completed within 4 to 12 months of completing required core-courses. Candidates who transferred from the MSc should take the QE within 12 months of the transfer.

[4] The QE Committee includes a Chair (the Graduate Coordinator or their designate who is not associated with the Candidate’s research or Committee), and typically at least 3 regular Oceanography faculty, including the Advisor(s) of the sub-discipline, and an External Examiner drawn from the regular Oceanography faculty outside the sub-discipline(s) of the Candidate (see definition of “external” in Section 1).

[5] The QE procedure is as follows:

1. The Candidate prepares a short summary (300 words, maximum) of their general research interests and submits it to their Advisor(s) for approval. The summary is intended to guide regular faculty members in compiling the reading list. A dated copy of the summary must be provided to the Graduate Secretary who appends it to the Candidate’s departmental file.
2. Within 2 weeks of receipt of the summary, the Advisor(s) schedules the QE, identifies the members of the QE Committee (see examining committee membership as outlined in Section 5.02 [2] and Section 5.02 [4]), sends a copy of the research summary to each, and requests that they join the Advisor(s) in providing one or two papers (book chapters are acceptable) to be included in the QE reading list. Please note that the External Examiner may provide a paper to be included in the QE reading list but this is not a requirement. The list must not contain anything authored by any member of the QE Committee. The list must contain between 5 and 8 papers/chapters. The papers/chapters must be forwarded to the Advisor within 2 weeks of the request.
3. Once compiled, the Advisor(s) distributes the reading list to the Candidate and members of the QE Committee.
4. The QE must be held within 6 weeks of the reading list being distributed.

5. Prior to the exam, the chair is provided with the research statement, reading list, selected papers, list of completed courses and previous degree programs of the candidate. The Chair moderates the exam (see guidelines below) and does not participate in questioning. Only in exceptional circumstances should the entirety of the QE last longer than 2 hours. The exam begins with an uninterrupted 20-minute presentation by the Candidate who will demonstrate their understanding of the concepts, meaning, and relevance of the reading list in relation to their chosen field of research, perhaps highlighting common threads or links to the extant literature as appropriate.
6. The QE Committee then examines the Candidate on oceanographic topics related to their research interests, where entry points into the questions and discussions must be based on the reading material provided to the Candidate and (or) addressed in their presentation.
7. Upon the completion of questioning, the committee meets *in camera* to reach a consensus on the exam outcome and provide recommendations to the Candidate and the Advisory Committee as appropriate.
8. Possible outcomes of the Qualifying Examination are:
 - a) The Candidate passes without extra conditions.
 - b) The Candidate passes but is informed of weaknesses that should be addressed during their tenure in the form of courses, audits, or directed studies.
 - c) The Candidate passes conditionally and is asked to fulfill specific requirements that address weaknesses identified during the QE that need to be resolved. The format and timeline for additional requirements will be determined by the Examining Committee during the in-camera session. These requirements may include a written examination, completion of a directed study course, or a research paper on a specific topic. In their communication with the Candidate, the Examining Committee must clearly specify the evaluation criteria and process. In the event that the requirements are deemed by the Examining Committee to have not been met, the Candidate is transferred to the MSc program.
 - d) The Candidate is transferred to the MSc program.
9. The possible outcomes of a follow-up written examination are:
 - a) The Candidate passes without extra conditions.
 - b) The Candidate passes, but is informed of weaknesses that should be addressed during their tenure, in the form of courses, audits, or directed studies.
 - c) The Candidate is transferred to the MSc program.
10. The QE Chair shall submit a written and signed report to the Department Chair and the Graduate Coordinator wherein they will summarise the procedure, outcome and recommendations of the QE Committee and copies of the report will be forwarded to the Candidate and the QE Committee and it will be appended to the Candidate's departmental file. The report will include: Appendix 1, Section 5.02 [1-4] and item 8 (outcomes); Appendix 2, list of assigned readings in citation format; Appendix 3, research statement and references provided by the candidate; and, if possible, Appendix 4, Chair's preamble to the examination.

[6] Guidelines for the Chair of PhD Qualifying Examinations.

- The Exam:
 - Introduce the Candidate, the External and the Examining Committee.
 - Summarise the QE procedure: presentation; questioning; *in camera* meeting, outcome and recommendations.
 - Keep the presentation by the Candidate to 20 minutes with no interruptions; if it gets to 25 minutes, signal a one-minute cut-off.
 - Announce the order of Examiner questioning, beginning with External and ending with the Advisor(s).
 - Limit the examination to two rounds of questions, the second round being shorter.
 - Keep the Examiners on time: 10 minutes each with ~15 minutes for the External on the first round, and less on the second round.
 - Keep notes on the time used by Examiners.
 - Do not let Examiners go astray—keep everyone on track (for example, it may be appropriate to remind Examiners that a QE is not a proposal defence).
 - Discourage discussion among members of the Examining Committee; questions must be directed to the Candidate who should be permitted to respond without interruption.
 - Do not allow the Advisor(s) to answer questions directed to the Candidate.
 - Keep the process just, calm, and professional.
 - The entire exam should last no longer than 2 hours.
 - Keep notes on significant issues that arise during questioning.
- The *in camera* meeting:
 - Remind the QE Committee of the QE outcome options (see above).
 - Ask for recommendations and comments beginning with the External and then the other members of the Committee in the order of questioning.
 - Encourage the examiners to seek a consensus decision if possible. If a vote is required and results in a split decision, the Chair will cast the deciding vote. Only the decision of the Committee will be reported, not how it was reached.
 - Keep notes on significant issues that the QE Committee agree should be included in the report of outcome (below).
 - The QE Chair shall submit a written report (see **5.02** [5] 10. above)

5.03 PhD Thesis Proposal and Defence

[1] PhD candidates are expected to complete their thesis proposal and defence thereof within 4 and 12 months of completing the QE.

[2] The requirement consists of a written thesis proposal and a public oral defence directed to the Examining Committee. The written proposal will include an overview of the research topic, relevant background material, and a plan for conducting the research at a PhD level of inquiry. The oral portion is the defence of the written proposal and it may include other related and relevant aspects of general oceanography; i.e., topics addressed by the Examining Committee may relate not just to the proposed research, but also to broader oceanographic issues as deemed relevant and appropriate by the Examining Committee and by the Chair of the Proposal Defence.

5.03.1 *Examining Committee*

[1] The Examining Committee is selected by the Advisory Committee, and it consists of members from the Advisory Committee, one or more External member(s), and the Department Representative who Chairs, and must be independent of the Committee. The Graduate Secretary will arrange for the Departmental Representative (the Graduate Coordinator or their designate).

[2] The proposal typically receives input from the Advisor(s) and others and approval from the Advisory Committee is required to proceed with the oral defence. Once approved, the Candidate must submit a hard copy of the proposal to the Graduate Secretary for public display in the Departmental Office at least 10 working days prior to the proposal defence date.

[3] The Thesis Proposal is a formal departmental requirement and carries the same weight as courses, thesis defence, etc. Failure to complete the Thesis Proposal within the required time frame reflects poorly on the Candidate and may endanger their standing in the program.

5.03.2 *Thesis Proposal Outcome*

[1] Based on the written proposal and oral defence thereof, the Chair of the defence will submit a report on the outcome to the Graduate Secretary indicating the nature of any corrections to be made. In the event of an unsuccessful defence, an explanation of the outcome must be provided in the report. A copy the report must be provided to the Candidate, the Advisor(s) and the Examining Committee. It will be appended to the Candidate's departmental file.

[2] There are four possible outcomes of a proposal defence:

- Candidate continues in the PhD program with or without revisions to the proposal.
- Candidate is given permission to re-defend.
- Candidate transfers to the MSc program.
- Candidate withdraws from the program.

5.04 **PhD Thesis and Defence**

[1] FGS determines the expectations of a PhD thesis (FGS §10.4; Doctoral Theses and FGS §10.5; Regulations for the Defence of a Doctoral Thesis) and the procedures relating to its defence (FGS §10.5.1; Doctoral Defence Procedures). In addition, Candidates are expected to give a Departmental Seminar on their thesis after the successful completion of the thesis defence.

6 **FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

[1] The Candidate and Advisor(s) are required to reach an agreement on student stipend and research funding support, and to inform the Graduate Secretary of the arrangement and any changes to it.

[2] Candidates should investigate and secure additional sources of funding, e.g., NSERC scholarships, Nova Scotia Graduate Scholarships, Killam Scholarships, etc. They should also consider Teaching Assistantships in Oceanography and other Departments as well as dedicated FGS support for "Graduate Thesis Student Conference Travel Grant" and FGS "External Funding Opportunities".

7 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

[1] Candidates should consult FGS Regulations for University regulations on intellectual property, conflict of interest, intellectual honesty, plagiarism, scholarly integrity, etc. (FGS §6; Intellectual Property and Conflict of Interest).

8 PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT ACADEMIC APPEALS

8.01 Introduction

[1] The procedures detailed below will be followed in cases where a Candidate wishes to appeal an academic procedure, other than a grade, based on the criteria detailed in section **8.02** below. Grade appeals are administered by the University Registrar.

[2] The regulations and procedures below cover appeals launched by both undergraduate and graduate Candidates in the Department of Oceanography at Dalhousie University.

[3] The procedures do not apply to labour disputes between/among an employee (be that person a Candidate, post-doc, etc.) and an employer (faculty, staff, etc.) regarding working conditions. Persons wishing to dispute a labour condition should consult either the Chair of the Department and/or their union agreement, if applicable, or the laws governing labour relations in Nova Scotia and the procedures detailed therein.

[4] The regulations do not apply if the cause of the dispute centers on gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, official language, or disability discrimination. In such cases the complainant must contact the Dalhousie Office of Human Rights, Equity & Harassment Prevention for procedures. Nor are these regulations applicable to cases of sexual harassment, assault, criminality, etc., wherein Dalhousie Security or Law Enforcement should be involved.

[5] There are no appeals of admission decisions, including transfer to the PhD program, on the grounds detailed below in section **8.02**.

[6] The procedures in this handbook apply only to the *administration* of qualifying or preliminary examinations, comprehensive examinations, thesis proposal defences, and Master's thesis defences. *Results* of such examinations cannot be appealed as oral portions cannot be re-graded.

[7] Appeals related to Doctoral defences must be directed to Faculty of Graduate Studies in the first instance.

8.02 Basis for an Appeal

[1] The grounds for appeal are limited to the following, and for all the onus is on the Candidate (now the “Appellant”) to prove, through factual documentation, that such conditions existed.

1. Procedural Unfairness. This means that the method used to administer the academic process, e.g., an exam, was unreasonably and inherently biased against any person attempting the process. Note: exams and their content, in and of themselves, are not procedurally unfair. Differences in how an exam is administered among the sub-disciplines in the Department of Oceanography do not constitute unfairness, as long as the method is applied consistently within the sub-discipline.
2. Bias. This means that the process was conducted in such a way as to disadvantage specifically a particular Appellant, relative to others undertaking the same process.
3. Irregularity in Procedure. This means that the process did not follow the procedures set in the regulations and guidelines governing the actions of the Department of Oceanography and its regular faculty.
4. Unfair Expectation(s). This means that the deliverable(s) resulting from the process could not or cannot be reasonably expected of any capable person who undertakes assiduously, genuinely, and accurately the steps leading to completion of the process.

[2] A complete written appeal must be submitted to the Chair of the Department of Oceanography within 10 working days following the event or circumstances being appealed.

[3] The appeal submission must include:

1. A description of the exact nature of the appeal, citing the grounds for the appeal as specified above.
2. Specific details of the alleged unfairness, bias, irregularity, or unfair expectation(s) and any other relevant considerations or information, including a summary of relevant events and their chronology.
3. The requested resolution of the appeal, which is limited to a reasonable academic action(s).

[4] The submission of an appeal will engender the following actions by the Chair of the Department of Oceanography:

1. The Chair will contact the Appellant and the person responsible for the process being appealed to determine if an informal resolution is possible.
2. Failing an informal resolution, the Chair will constitute an Ad Hoc Appeal Panel for the specific appeal. The nature of Panel procedures is detailed below in section **8.03**.

[5] Decisions of the Ad Hoc Appeal Panel are forwarded to the Chair who will communicate the decision in writing to the Appellant.

[6] Decisions of the Ad Hoc Appeal Panel are subject to further appeal to the Faculty of Science (undergraduates) or the Faculty of Graduate Studies (graduate students), or the Senate, as specified by those administrative units.

8.03 The Ad Hoc Appeal Panel

[1] Decisions on appeals are made by the Departmental Ad Hoc Appeal Panel (the “Panel”).

[2] The Panel does not have a fixed membership. It will consist of two regular faculty members, chosen on a fixed rotating basis from all regular faculty in the Department of Oceanography. The regular faculty member(s) responsible for the process being appealed will be excluded. For graduate students, the Appellant’s Advisor(s), or for undergraduates, the Appellant’s Honours Advisor(s) if applicable, will also be excluded from the list.

[3] An appropriate graduate student (for undergraduate appeals) or Post-doctoral fellow (for graduate appeals) will constitute the third and final member of the Panel. Any student on the Panel must not have a personal or academic conflict of interest with respect to the Appellant. For undergraduates, the appropriate graduate student will be chosen from the extant graduate student cohort, without conflict of interest. For graduate students, the Post-doctoral member will be chosen from the extant Post-doctoral Fellow cohort, without conflict of interest.

[4] The Panel will convene a formal Appeal Hearing (the “Hearing”) at the first opportunity when all involved, i.e., the “parties” being the Appellant and the regular faculty member who owns the process (process-owner), and the Panel members can meet to consider the verbal arguments of the appeal, but preferably within three weeks of constitution of the Panel.

[5] If a Hearing is convened, the Panel will first meet in camera and as soon as possible to choose a Chair who will control and direct all communications.

[6] The Chair of the Panel will make sure the process-owner is aware of the appeal and provide, in a timely manner, a copy of the complete appeal document to the process-owner.

[7] The process-owner will provide the Chair of the Panel with a written rebuttal to the appeal within 10 working days of the appeal being received. Exceptions will be made to accommodate persons being at sea or subject to other serious limitations in availability. The Panel will forward the rebuttal to the Appellant.

[8] In an appeal process, the Candidate has the right to representation. The Candidate is required to inform the Chair of the Panel, in writing, that they will have a representative at the appeal and if they intend to call a witness(es).

[9] A witness(es) may be called by either party only if that/those witness(es) can testify about direct knowledge of the academic procedure. No character or indirect testimony is permitted. The Chair of the Panel must be informed 72-hours before a Hearing if witness(es) will be called, along with the witness(es) identity and their significance/relevance to the Hearing. The Chair of the Panel will then inform the process owner of the witness(es) expected to appear before the Panel. The testimony of witness(es) may be terminated by the Chair of the Panel if the testimony is judged to be not relevant.

8.04 The Hearing

[1] The Hearing will adhere to the following steps:

1. The Chair of the Panel will direct the flow of the Hearing. The Chair will ensure each party is properly heard and will direct the questioning accordingly.
2. The Chair of the Panel will first invite the Appellant to present and explain their case; this will be followed by an invitation to the process-owner for a rebuttal.
3. Neither the Appellant nor the process-owner may ask questions during these opening presentations. Panel members may, however, interrupt a presentation to ask questions.
4. At the end of presentations, the Appellant will be invited to direct questions to the process-owner for the purpose of seeking clarifications (only) and present any testimony from witness(es). When completed, the process-owner will be invited to do the same. The Panel may interrupt the questioning at any time to ask questions and the Chair of the Panel will ensure that this questioning remains civil and relevant.
5. Each party will then be asked to present short-summary arguments.
6. At the end of the Hearing, the Chair of the Panel will ask the Appellant and process-owner, Appellant-representative and witness(es) to retire and convene an *in camera* discussion of the presentations and the Appeal Document. The Panel will then determine the validity of the appeal and of the requested resolution.

[2] The Chair of the Panel will communicate to the Chair of the Department in writing, within 3 working days (except for serious time conflicts such as noted those mentioned in **8.3** above) the decision of the Panel. The Chair of the Department will then communicate the decision to the parties as soon as possible.

[3] No persons providing solely moral support may be present at a Hearing. A person providing aid to someone with a disability is permitted, as is a translator, but such persons may not testify at a Hearing.

[4] A summary of the appeal timeline is as follows:

- The appeal must be filed within 10 working days of the event with the Department of Oceanography Chair.
- The Chair contacts the Appellant and the process-owner regarding the process to determine if an informal resolution is possible.
- If no resolution is possible, within 10 days an Appeal Panel will be formed by the Department of Oceanography Chair.
- The Panel meets at the earliest available time to designate a Chair of the Appeals Panel and to review the procedure.
- The Chair of the Appeals Panel informs the process-owner of the appeal.
- The process-owner has 10 days to respond to the appeal.
- The Panel schedules an appeal hearing at the earliest appropriate date.
- The Panel informs the Department of Oceanography Chair of its decision within 3 working days of the hearing.

8.05 Supplementary Points

[1] The Ad Hoc Appeal Panel has no jurisdiction to hear student appeals on matters involving a requested exemption from the application of Departmental, Faculty or University regulations or procedures, except where/when irregularities or unfairness in the application thereof is alleged. This means that only procedural issues, and not the merits of the regulations, are subject to appeal.

[2] The Ad Hoc Appeal Panel may not render decisions counter to the Department of Oceanography, Faculty, or University regulations, nor can it make decisions that go beyond strictly academic matters; i.e., financial or administrative matters are excluded. If the requested resolution contains such points, they must be dismissed.

[3] Matters involving allegations of “failure to supervise” by a graduate student must be referred directly to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for resolution.