



Graduate Student Frequently Asked Questions

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

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1) Questions asked during admission or at the beginning of the graduate program

1.1 General Questions

1. HOW DO I APPLY TO GRADUATE SCHOOL?

Step 1: Look for a potential supervisor and a graduate student position. Some positions are advertised on the department website or lab website. Contact the supervisor to guide you through the application process.

Step 2: Prepare your application and required documents.

Step 3: Apply (see <https://www.mun.ca/become/graduate/apply-to-memorial/> for specific instructions)

2. DURING WHICH SEMESTERS CAN I ENROLL AS A GRADUATE STUDENT?

You can enroll as a graduate student during any semester (Fall, Winter, or Spring).

3. CAN I DEFER MY INTAKE? HOW MANY TIMES/FOR HOW LONG?

Yes. You can defer multiple times, but keep in mind that some supervisors may have a limit on how many deferrals they accept before they withdraw their offer. Please check the University Diary for the final date by which you are allowed to defer.

4. HOW FREQUENTLY DOES A GRADUATE STUDENT GET PAID?

Graduate students are paid in bi-weekly intervals.

5. HOW MANY COURSES AM I SUPPOSED TO TAKE AS A GRADUATE STUDENT?

MSc students take two courses in addition to BIOC 7000 and BIOC 6999. PhD students only take BIOC 7000 and BIOC 6999. Your supervisor or supervisory committee may require that you take additional courses.

6. ARE THERE ANY MANDATORY COURSES I MUST TAKE AS A GRADUATE STUDENT?

Yes. BIOC 7000 (Graduate Skills), and BIOC 6999 (Biochemistry Seminar) are the mandatory courses for all graduate students. Your supervisor or supervisory committee may require that you take additional courses.

7. HOW DO I COPE WITH STRESS OR DEPRESSION IN GRADUATE SCHOOL?

The best place to get support for stress and/or depression is the Student Wellness and Counselling Centre: <https://www.mun.ca/studentwellness/>. They have partnered with SGS to specifically help graduate students.

8. WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO ENROLL AS A PHD OR MSC STUDENT?

Generally, a 75% average in your past 20 courses, or an upper second class honours in your previous degree. PhD students generally require a thesis-based MSc but direct admission from a BSc to a PhD is possible. It is critical you have secured a supervisor in order to be admitted to the graduate program as it is a research-intensive degree.

9. HOW MANY SEMINARS DO I NEED TO DO AS AN MSC OR PHD STUDENT?

MSc students give one seminar during their program, and a PhD student gives 2 seminars. This is done via BIOC6999

10. IS THE TUITION FEE FOR A PART-TIME GRADUATE STUDENT THE SAME AS A FULL-TIME STUDENT?

Please see the [SGS website](#) for the specific fee structure for MSc and PhD students. There are no differences in tuition for part-time and full-time students.

1.2 Laboratory Procedure Related Questions

11. WHAT CERTIFICATIONS DO I NEED TO ACCESS THE LAB?

You are required to complete online training courses on Brightspace, which cover topics such as BioSafety, Radiation Awareness or Safety, WHMIS, and Lab Safety. Please check with your supervisor to determine the specific courses you need to take, particularly, if you are normally located in the computational or pedagogical lab spaces.

12. HOW CAN I BOOK/RESERVE ANALYZING MACHINES ONLINE?

Go to the [Biochemistry scheduler](#). You will need to make an account the first time you use the site.

13. WHO DO I CONTACT REGARDING LABORATORY MACHINE OPERATING PROCEDURES?

Heather Fifield, Coordinator, Laboratories and Services. Email: hfifield@mun.ca

14. ARE THERE ANY WRITTEN GUIDELINES FOR TRANSPORTING CRYOGENIC LIQUIDS/BIOHAZARDOUS MATERIAL AND OTHER LABORATORY REAGENTS?

Please consult with your supervisor regarding specific chemicals and biohazards.

15. HOW DO I GET QUOTATIONS FROM VENDORS?

Most often quotes are obtained through the vendor websites or by emailing the vendor representative for our region. This information can be found on their website.

16. HOW DO I ORDER CHEMICALS/LABORATORY ITEMS?

You can order chemicals from the Faculty of Science (FOS) Stores or from outside suppliers. For orders from the FOS Stores, your Principal Investigator (PI) can place the order directly. To order chemicals, reagents, or lab items from external suppliers, you must fill out an EHS requisition for chemicals and reagents or a FOS procurement requisition form for other items. The procurement form is available

at <https://mun.ca/science/supply-chain-management/forms/>. After completing the form, submit it along with the supplier's quote to your PI.

17. CAN I HAVE ACCESS TO THE DEPARTMENT STORE AS A GRADUATE STUDENT TO ORDER CHEMICALS/LAB ITEMS?

You can order lab items via the EHS Assistant tab on your MUN account home page once your PI granted you access to order from stores. You should fill your cart with all of the items you need before submitting the order.

18. WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE FOR PURCHASING HAZARDOUS AND NON-HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS THAT ARE NOT AVAILABLE IN THE FOS DEPARTMENT STORES?

Ordering chemicals is done through the EHS system using the “requisition” option. You should order as many items as possible from a given company at the same time to reduce shipping costs.

19. HOW DO I SHIP MY SAMPLES?

Fill out the inbound/outbound shipping request [form](#) and submit the form with your samples to FOS stores.

20. HOW DO I GET TRAINING FOR EQUIPMENT USE?

Your supervisor or laboratories and service coordinator can train you for equipment use. For departmental equipment, please contact Heather Fifield for training (hfifield@mun.ca). There are some pieces of equipment that require mandatory training (eg. autoclaves); for these you will not be able to book them until you have been certified as a user (see #12 for booking equipment).

21. IS THERE AN ACCESSIBLE PRINTING FACILITY IN THE DEPARTMENT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS?

Printing can be done through the library or using a printer purchased by your supervisor.

1.3 Questions Related To Graduate Teaching Assistantships

22. WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS (TAS) IN THE UNIVERSITY?

TAs assist instructors with administering their course. Duties can include marking, giving tutorials, demonstrating labs, among others. Specific duties will be communicated by the instructor.

23. HOW DOES THE DEPARTMENT SELECT AND ASSIGN TEACHING ASSISTANTS TO COURSES OR PROFESSORS?

Teaching and graduate assistant work is covered under the TAUMUN (Teaching Assistants' Union of MUN) Collective Agreement. Each term there is a call for students to express their interest in a TA position. You can only be assigned to a position that you have applied to but are not guaranteed that position. You should apply to multiple positions. Each student must TA 80 hours per year as per their program of study form.

24. WHAT TRAINING AND SUPPORT ARE PROVIDED TO TEACHING ASSISTANTS TO EXCEL IN THEIR ROLES?

[Teaching Assistant Training Program](#) by TAUMUN will provide the TA training.

25. WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS TO FURTHER DEVELOP THEIR TEACHING SKILLS?

The [Teaching Skills Enhancement Program](#) (Graduate Students) will allow you to improve your teaching skills.

26. HOW DO TEACHING ASSISTANTS INTERACT WITH STUDENTS?

Brightspace is the online learning tool the TAs can use to interact with students and carry out their teaching activities. In addition, TAs will work directly with students in the lab courses and during tutorials.

27. HOW ARE TEACHING ASSISTANTS EVALUATED AND GIVEN FEEDBACK FOR IMPROVEMENT?

TAs will receive written feedback from the instructor at the end of every term. Additional feedback can be sought at any time from the instructor.

28. HOW DOES THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS ANY CHALLENGES OR ISSUES THAT TEACHING ASSISTANTS MAY FACE DURING THEIR TENURE?

TAUMUN (Teaching Assistant Union MUN) can meet with members to hear individual or group concerns about complaints and/or suggestions for improvements. TAUMUN contact details found here: [Contact Us | Teaching Assistants' Union of MUN \(TAUMUN\) | Memorial University of Newfoundland](#)

29. WHAT ARE THE COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS OFFERED TO TEACHING ASSISTANTS?

Teaching and graduate assistant work is covered under the TAUMUN (Teaching Assistants' Union of MUN) Collective Agreement. The hourly rate of pay as of September 1, 2023 is \$24.93 (vacation pay included). In addition, TAUMUN offers travel and employee assistance funding support to eligible members. More details can be found here: <https://www.mun.ca/taumun/>

30. ARE THERE ANY SPECIAL INITIATIVES OR PROGRAMS TO RECOGNIZE EXCEPTIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS?

The department has a TA award to recognize the best TAs of the year. Usually, up to 2 TAs are recognized for their exceptional service.

31. HOW DOES THE UNIVERSITY ENSURE FAIRNESS AND EQUITY IN THE ALLOCATION OF TA POSITIONS ACROSS DEPARTMENTS AND COURSES?

Article 12 of the TAUMUN Collective agreement outlines how units handle the hiring of graduate assistants. Once students who were offered assistantships on their program of study are hired, then the unit can invite students to express their interest in vacant assistantship positions. Hiring decisions are made based on qualifications and experience. More details on

the appointment process can be found here: [TAUMUN's Current Collective Agreement \(2023-2026\).pdf](#)

1.4 Questions Related To Funding And Payroll

32. WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR SETTING UP PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS FOR VARIOUS PURPOSES, SUCH AS RETIREMENT CONTRIBUTIONS OR CHARITABLE DONATIONS?

To set up payroll deductions for retirement contributions or charitable donations, email myhr@mun.ca. Remember to include your student number.

33. ARE THERE ANY LIMITATIONS OR RESTRICTIONS ON THE TYPES OF PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS EMPLOYEES CAN MAKE?

There may be some restrictions and it is best to email myhr@mun.ca to get confirmation on what is eligible for your personal situation. Remember to include your student number in your request.

34. HOW CAN STUDENTS UPDATE THEIR PAYROLL DEDUCTION PREFERENCES OR MAKE CHANGES TO EXISTING DEDUCTIONS?

Normally, you can change your payroll deduction preference if the deductions are to pay tuition or charitable donations. Other deductions may have less flexibility depending on the nature of those deductions.

35. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING PAYROLL DEDUCTION FOR CERTAIN PAYMENTS, SUCH AS HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUMS OR SAVINGS PLANS?

This allows you to spread out the payment in more manageably-sized payments. In addition, since it happens automatically, you don't have to worry about missing payments.

36. CAN EMPLOYEES CHOOSE THE FREQUENCY OF PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS (E.G., MONTHLY, BI-WEEKLY, ETC.)?

No, payroll deductions occur on each pay day (bi-weekly).

37. HOW DOES THE UNIVERSITY HANDLE PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS FOR TAXES AND OTHER STATUTORY DEDUCTIONS?

Deductions are applied to your gross pay and the remaining amount (referred to as net pay) is deposited to your bank account. Memorial will issue you a tax slip (T4/ T4A etc.), usually by February of the following calendar year, that summarizes your pay and taxes deducted during that year. These tax slips are used when filing your annual income tax to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and can be downloaded from your self-service account. Many deductions may be recovered after you file your taxes (by the end of April).

38. ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC DEADLINES OR TIMELINES FOR MAKING CHANGES TO PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS?

You should allow at least 2 weeks for changes to payroll deductions. The more notice the better for payroll processing.

39. HOW CAN STUDENTS VIEW PAYROLL DETAILS AND TRACK DEDUCTIONS OVER TIME?

You can see your payment information through your MUN Self-Service account. Go to MUN account home page (my.mun.ca). Then select Students>Launch Memorial Self-Service>Employee Services>Pay Information>Pay Stub

40. ARE THERE ANY RESOURCES OR SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS?

Any employee can email myhr@mun.ca about their pay but you should check with your department administrator first in the event, the question can be easily answered.

41. I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW MY FUNDING IS DISTRIBUTED, ARE THERE ANY AVAILABLE RESOURCES TO UNDERSTAND THIS?

Most graduate funding is distributed on a biweekly basis. For example, if you were awarded \$10,000 per year, then you would receive \$384.62 biweekly ($\$10,000/26=384.62$). When your funding is being set up or awarded, ask about how and when it is to be paid out.

42. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEALTH INSURANCE GUARD ME AND GREEN SHIELD?

Guard.me, is the health insurance provider for international students. Once an international student has obtained an MCP card, they can choose to opt out of foreign health and move to the student union managed health plan (Green Shield). More details can be found here: [Foreign Health Insurance | Internationalization Office | Memorial University of Newfoundland \(mun.ca\)](#)

43. HOW CAN I OPT-OUT/OPT-IN FOR MY HEALTH INSURANCE?

- a. To determine if you are eligible to opt out of foreign health, visit: [Opting out of the Foreign Health Insurance | Internationalization Office | Memorial University of Newfoundland \(mun.ca\)](#).
- b. To opt out Green Shield coverage, you must provide proof of alternate coverage. More details are found here: [Memorial University | guard.me](#)

44. CAN MY HEALTH INSURANCE COVER MY FAMILY MEMBERS?

Yes, you can add your family members to your health insurance.

45. WHO DO I NEED TO CONTACT REGARDING FUNDING-RELATED ISSUES?

Please contact Carla Yetman at biocadmin@mun.ca

46. CAN I APPLY FOR EXTERNAL FUNDING OPTIONS?

Students are encouraged to apply for external funding. Canadian citizens and permanent residents are allowed to apply for NSERC or CIHR funding. Many other

charitable organizations allow applications from international students. Consult with your supervisor on the best strategy for your situation. For information on some external awards, visit: [Awards and scholarships | School of Graduate Studies | Memorial University of Newfoundland \(mun.ca\)](#).

1.5 Miscellaneous Questions

47. CAN I WORK PART-TIME OFF-CAMPUS AS A GRADUATE STUDENT?

Section 3.4.8 of the [School of Graduate Studies regulations](#) state that “A full-time graduate student is one who registers as such, devotes full time to the student’s academic program and may not commit more than 24 hours a week working time, including teaching assistant or research assistant duties, to matters other than the degree program.” For international students, your ability to work off campus is outlined on your study permit. If you have questions about study permit regulations, you should consult with an immigration advisor in the International Office.

48. HOW MANY HOURS CAN I WORK ON CAMPUS?

Full-time graduate students can work a maximum of 24 hours per week (on and off campus combined). For international students, please refer to your study permit for any additional considerations.

49. ARE THERE DIFFERENT REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS ADMITTED DIRECTLY TO A PHD PROGRAM AFTER UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES COMPARED TO THOSE WHO ENTER A PHD PROGRAM AFTER COMPLETING A MASTER'S DEGREE?

There are no differences except that the student will have completed 2 extra courses during their MSc period. A student that transfers from an MSc to a PhD will be eligible for an extra year of SGS baseline funding.

50. WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR ROLLING OVER/ TRANSFERRING FROM MSC TO PHD?

The transfer should normally occur within two years of MSc enrollment, preferably before the 5th semester, and after you have completed all of your courses. A supervisory committee meeting should be scheduled to discuss the prospect of transferring to the PhD. At this meeting, you should summarize your past accomplishments during your MSc and present your proposed PhD project. Upon approval by the supervisory committee, please contact the Graduate Secretary or Deputy Head Graduate to process the transfer.

51. DO I NEED TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT/LAB POLICY DOCUMENT BETWEEN MYSELF AND MY PI WHEN I ENTER GRADUATE STUDIES?

It is a good idea to sign an agreement/lab policy document with your PI as it clearly lays out the expectations of both parties. If you are concerned with the contents of the agreement, you should not sign it and consult with the Deputy Head (Graduate Studies) or Head.

52. I HAVE ENROLLED AS A PHD STUDENT. CAN I COMPLETE MY GRADUATE STUDIES WITH AN MSC AND GRADUATE?

Yes, if you and your supervisory committee are in agreement, you can change from PhD to MSc. Please request the appropriate form from the Graduate Secretary.

2. QUESTIONS ASKED WHEN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

2.1 Questions Related To The Graduate Program

53. CAN I CHANGE THE PROJECT I'M WORKING ON IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PROGRAM?

This is possible but must be done in full consultation with your supervisor. Your supervisor and supervisory committee will help you to plan out any changes to your research project.

54. CAN I TAKE ANY UNDERGRADUATE OR GRADUATE COURSES DURING MY GRADUATE STUDENTSHIP?

You can take any undergraduate or graduate courses that are listed on your program of study form or added using a course change form with permission from your supervisor.

55. HOW DO I DECIDE ON THE COURSES TO FOLLOW AS A GRADUATE STUDENT?

This is decided upon by consultation with your supervisor. Your supervisory committee can also provide guidance.

56. HOW DO I CHOOSE A GRADUATE COURSE TO COMPLETE IF THE COURSES ARE NOT DEFINED IN MY STUDY PROGRAM?

You can decide on which courses are most appropriate in consultation with your supervisor.

57. CAN I AUDIT A GRADUATE COURSE?

Yes, you can audit any course (undergraduate or graduate) with permission of the instructor(s).

58. IF THE COURSES OFFERED IN THE DEPARTMENT DO NOT MATCH MY RESEARCH/PREFERENCE, HOW DO I SELECT A COURSE TO FOLLOW AS AN MSC STUDENT?

You may take courses outside of the department if that is more appropriate for your research project. This is decided upon in consultation with your supervisor.

59. CAN I PROCEED WITH THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IF I FAIL A COURSE?

Failure of a graduate course results in termination of your program.

60. WHAT IS THE MINIMUM GRADE REQUIRED TO PASS A GRADUATE COURSE?

The minimum for a pass is 65% for courses listed on your program of study form but scholarships typically require a minimum of 75%.

61. IS THERE ANY SPECIFIC MINIMUM NUMBER OF PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR AN MSC/PHD STUDENT?

There is no university or departmental regulation stipulating the number of publications required for a graduate degree. However, individual supervisors may have policies regarding publications.

62. WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS WITH REFERENCE TO CONFERENCES/ACADEMIC PARTICIPATION FROM MSC AND PHD STUDENTS?

Each supervisor will have different expectations. You should discuss the potential for attending conferences with your supervisor. It is a good idea to discuss academic expectations very early in your program so that both parties are on the same page.

63. WHEN SHOULD I GIVE MY SEMINARS?

Usually seminars are given in the second year for MSc and PhD students and in the last year for PhD students.

64. DO I NEED TO SCHEDULE REGULAR MEETINGS WITH MY SUPERVISOR?

It is up to you and your supervisor to set the number of times to meet. It is good practice to discuss this with your supervisor early in your program so that expectations are clear for both parties.

65. HOW DO I DECIDE WHEN TO CALL A COMMITTEE MEETING?

You, your supervisor, or a member of your supervisory committee can call a meeting at any time. You should organize a meeting at least once per year but if you feel that you need more guidance, then you should call a committee meeting. Committee meetings should also be called before transferring from MSc to PhD, before initiating the comprehensive exam process, and to verify that all the necessary data has been collected for the final version of your thesis.

66. HOW MANY COMMITTEE MEETING SHOULD I HAVE PER YEAR?

Graduate students should arrange committee meetings annually.

67. WHAT IS A GRADUATE STUDENT'S MAXIMUM VACATION TIME PER YEAR?

There are no specific guidelines or rules to how many days a graduate student can take vacation. This should be discussed with your supervisor.

68. CAN I GET MATERNITY/PARENTAL/HEALTH LEAVE DURING MY GRADUATE PROGRAM? FOR HOW LONG?

You can apply for a leave of absence from your program. Leaves of absence are for the entire term. While you are on leave you will not receive SGS baseline funding but it is possible to receive funding through your supervisor's operating grant if the granting agency provides parental leave. For example, NSERC will provide up to 12 months of paid leave at the same level that was being paid from your supervisor's operating grant.

69. ARE THERE ANY RESEARCH INTERNSHIPS/INDUSTRIAL INTERNSHIPS THAT I CAN FOLLOW WHILE I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAM?

Please consult with your supervisor for any opportunities that may be suitable for your situation.

70. WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE FOR ME AS A GRADUATE STUDENT FOR COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH WORK?

Collaborative research work between labs within and outside the department occurs regularly. There is no formal mechanism to initiate collaborations. The best way to find a collaborator is to attend seminars (online or in person) within and outside the department to identify individuals working in an area that complements your research. All collaborative projects must be taken on in consultation and with approval of your supervisor.

71. ARE THERE SEMINARS AVAILABLE WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT ON UPCOMING SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AND APPLICATION PROCESSES FOR MSC AND PHD STUDENTS?

The School of Graduate Studies and the university regularly hold information sessions on scholarship opportunities. Information on these is circulated by email.

72. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY SUPERVISOR IS ON LEAVE AND UNAVAILABLE TO HELP ME?

Your supervisory committee is your first point of contact if you are having difficulties contacting your supervisor. Even if your supervisor is on leave, they have an obligation to provide supervision. This may be through assigning a temporary alternate supervisor or through remote supervision. If you continue to have issues with inadequate supervision, you should consult with the Deputy Head (Graduate Studies), the Head, or SGS as you feel is appropriate.

73. HOW DO I COPE WITH AN UNSUPPORTIVE PI?

This will vary on a case-by-case basis. The best thing to do is to seek guidance from a supervisory committee member, the Deputy Head (Graduate Studies), the Head, or SGS; in that order. If you are uncomfortable seeking guidance at any one of these levels then you may skip to the next level.

74. CAN I TAKE A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR PERSONAL, ACADEMIC, EMPLOYMENT, OR FINANCIAL REASONS?

Yes, you can apply to take a leave of absence using this [form](#). The specific guidelines for reasons to take a leave can also be found in this [link](#). There is a deadline early in the term to request a leave of absence, so please check the University diary. While on a leave of absence, you will not incur tuition fees and will not be paid a stipend. You are also not permitted to work on your thesis project while on a leave of absence.

2.2 Questions Related To Research.

75. CAN I BE A CO-AUTHOR FOR MY LABMATE'S RESEARCH IF I'M HELPING THEM CONDUCT THE EXPERIMENTS?

Yes, as per the university's guidelines, if you have contributed materially or conceptually to the research and share responsibility for the research, you should be an author on the publication. Please see the [SGS guidelines](#) for more information. It is best practice to agree on authorship before embarking on the research project. Please be aware that not all projects will result in a publication.

76. DO I HAVE OWNERSHIP OF MY DATA?

According to university regulations "Creators shall own the Intellectual Property Rights in Intellectual Property they create and, where there are two or more Creators, they shall co-own such Intellectual Property Rights." However, the university stipulates that all intellectual property development at Memorial must be free to use by Memorial. The supervisor normally retains ownership of the data. You should discuss any issues with ownership with your supervisor in advance of doing the research. In all cases, you are

the primary custodian of your data and you must protect your data from loss. Please see the following links for more information:

<https://www.mun.ca/sgs/current-students/integrity-and-research-ethics-essentials/intellectual-property/>

<https://www.mun.ca/sgs/current-students/integrity-and-research-ethics-essentials/data-collection-storage-and-access/>

77. WHAT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR A GRADUATE STUDENT TO STORE RESEARCH DATA?

Most research data must be stored within the lab. Depending on your ethics approvals, you may also be able to store your data on the cloud. Alternatively, storing your data on an external hard drive that is store in a secure location may be the best option. You have an obligation to back-up all of your electronic data. Please discuss this with your supervisor for you specific situation especially if you have a data-heavy project.

78. MY RESEARCH INVOLVES HUMAN PARTICIPANTS. ARE THERE ANY GUIDELINES OR SPECIAL PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW BEFORE STARTING THE RESEARCH?

Yes, you must obtain research ethics clearances BEFORE beginning your research project. Clearances are obtained from the Health Research Authority. This can be a long process so you need to start early. Consult with your supervisory on how to proceed. For more information please see: <https://www.mun.ca/sgs/current-students/integrity-and-research-ethics-essentials/research-with-human-participants/>

79. HOW MANY HOURS DO I NEED TO WORK PER DAY ON MY THESIS PROJECT?

Your daily and weekly hours will vary depending on your research and TA obligations. Full-time students should expect to work 40 h per week, on average, on your thesis project and related coursework. Any work that is not specifically related to your thesis project or coursework is expected to be done outside these 40 h. Specific expectations

for working from home or on campus should be discussed with your supervisor early in your program.

80. DOES PUBLIC HOLIDAYS/UNIVERSITY HOLIDAYS ARE HOLIDAYS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS?

Yes, you are entitled to the holidays specified in the MUNFA, LUMUN Per Course Instructors, LUMUN Postdoctoral Fellows and TAUMUN list, which can be found at <https://www.mun.ca/hr/holiday-schedule-for-munfa-lumun-per-course-instr/>.

81. CAN I DO MY LAB EXPERIMENTS ON A HOLIDAY?

Yes. But you must follow the working alone procedure in your lab's safety manual. Please consult with your supervisor as some experiments should never be done alone (e.g. working with anesthesia). The MUN Safe app has a working alone feature.

82. MY LAB EXPERIMENTS NEED OVERNIGHT STAY/WEEKEND STAY. DO I NEED TO INFORM ANYBODY WHEN I WORK IN THE LAB?

Yes. Your supervisor is the primary person to inform. You must follow the working alone procedure in your lab's safety manual. Please consult with your supervisor as some experiments should never be done alone (e.g. working with anesthesia). The MUN Safe app has a working alone feature.

2.3 Questions Related To Graduate Student Support

83. WHAT SOFTWARE AVAILABLE FOR ME AS A GRADUATE STUDENT (E.G. REFERENCE MANAGEMENT, DATA ANALYSIS, IMAGE DRAWING ETC.)?

- a. There is a guide to citation management software available in the MUN QEII library (<https://guides.library.mun.ca/citationmanagement>).
- b. Many data analysis software (e.g. MATLAB, MINITAB, SPSS) require a paid license that is purchased by your supervisor.

- c. ChemDraw and Graphpad Prism are available through the department and are located on the computer lab computers on the 2nd floor.
- d. Microsoft office, Grammarly, and read&write can be downloaded via my.mun.ca.
- e. The Department of Biochemistry provides BioRender access to labs who have contributed to the cost of the institutional license. Please consult with your supervisor to gain access.

84. WHAT ARE THE RESOURCES/COURSES AVAILABLE TO IMPROVE MY WRITING SKILLS?

The School of Graduate Studies provides graduate student support for writing skills improvement through [The Writing Center](#). The writing center directly go over your work with you and help with tips and advice.

85. HOW DO I BALANCE MY FAMILY, SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC LIFE?

There is no easy answer to this question. Life balance is a difficult topic and each person will have a different opinion on what constitutes the right balance. As a graduate student, your priority must be your research. However, you also need to take time to be with your family and friends and to recharge. The advice that worked for me (SL Christian) was to treat graduate school like a full-time commitment and be present and engaged for at least 40h per week. Then, I was able to accomplish enough during the weekdays that I could mostly take evenings and weekends off. If you need more advice, please go to <https://www.mun.ca/sgs/current-students/health-and-wellness/> to see about options for counselling services.

86. WHAT COUNSELING OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR ME AS A GRADUATE STUDENT?

The School of Graduate Studies has a dedicated counsellor for graduate students. Please consult with the Deputy Head (Graduate Studies) or <https://www.mun.ca/sgs/current-students/health-and-wellness/> for information on how to contact them. Note that all conversations will remain confidential.

2.4 Conference And Travel Related Questions

87. HOW DO I DECIDE THE NUMBER OF CONFERENCES TO ATTEND?

Every graduate student should attend as many local conferences as possible. In addition, you should consult with your supervisor on which national or international conferences best suit your work and budget.

88. HOW DO I SELECT THE CONFERENCES?

Selecting a conference to attend depends on your research and the available funding. Please work with your supervisor directly to select the best conferences.

89. I NEED TO TRAVEL TO A CONFERENCE. WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF DOING IT?

Step 1: A minimum of 4 weeks before the conference, fill out a “[Request for Travel Assistance](#)” form with your information, information about the conference and your estimated budget. If you do not fill this out in advance, you will not get reimbursed for your travel expenses.

Step 2: Submit the Request for Travel Assistance form to the individuals list on the form, starting with your supervisor. Written proof of acceptance of a paper for presentation is to be submitted with the application. Often, after one person signs, they will forward to the next office. This is important because this is how departments will indicate if they will help fund your travel.

Step 3: In consultation with your supervisor, buy your airline tickets and register for the conference. If you want to get a travel advance to cover these costs, fill out a “[Travel Advance Request](#)” form.

Step 4: Go to the conference and have a great time.

Step 5: Once your conference is over, complete the [Travel Claim Form](#), solicit all required signatures, and submit the necessary receipts and the original Request for Travel Assistance Form to the School of Graduate Studies.

NB: all of these forms are be found at <https://docs.mun.ca/biochemistry>

90. WHAT ARE THE AVAILABLE FUNDING OPTIONS FOR MY CONFERENCE TRAVELING?

- a. Please see the most up to date [guidelines](#).
- b. As of 2023, you can get funding from TAUMUN (\$150 per student, 1 conference for MSc, 2 conferences for PhD), SGS (\$400), Faculty of Science (\$400), GSU (\$250 for MSc, \$500 for PhD and a maximum of \$250 per conference). See #89, step 2 for how to apply for this funding.
- c. Conference and travel funds may be awarded to attend not more than one conference in the case of a student in a master's program, and not more than two conferences in the case of students in a doctoral program.
- d. The Department of Biochemistry awards a number of Barrowman travel awards each year. You must apply in advance. These are advertised through the department's email list serve.

91. HOW DO I GET A TRAVEL AWARD?

Please see above. Scientific societies and vendors also offer travel awards so you should apply to all that are available to you.

92. WHOM DO I NEED TO CONTACT FOR TRAVEL-RELATED QUESTIONS?

Please contact the Biochemistry office. As of Winter 2024, this is Kaitlyn Connolly (kconnolly@mun.ca)

93. HOW DO I REIMBURSE CONFERENCE TRAVEL EXPENSES?

See above.

94. WHEN SHOULD I APPLY FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT, BEFORE/AFTER TRAVEL?

You can apply for a travel advance before your travel (optional) and get reimbursed after you travel.

95. IS THERE A LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF TIMES I CAN APPLY FOR TRAVEL ASSISTANCE?

There is a limit on the number of internal travel awards that you can be given but no limit to the number of times that you can travel.

3. QUESTIONS ASKED DURING THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM STAGE

96. IS THERE ANY SPECIFIC SEMESTER THAT I HAVE TO TAKE MY COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

The comprehensive exam should be taken in the 7th semester or earlier. If there are extenuating circumstances, students may be allowed to take it later.

97. BEFORE WHAT STAGE OF MY GRADUATE PROGRAM DO I NEED TO PASS MY COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

After you finish all of your courses (except BIOC 6999) and in the 7th semester or sooner.

98. HOW DO I PREPARE FOR MY COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

You should be reading widely in your field and thinking of potential interesting research questions that are related to your project. You should be presenting science (your data or in journal clubs) as much as possible to prepare for the presentation and question and answer portion of the exam.

99. ARE THERE ANY WRITTEN GUIDELINES ON THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

Yes, please consult with the Deputy Head (Graduate Studies)

100. WHAT IF I FAIL THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

You may repeat the comprehensive exam once. You may repeat all or selected parts, based on the committee's recommendation.

101. WHAT IS THE STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

It starts with your supervisor informing the Deputy Head (Graduate Studies) about your intention to take the exam. Then, a committee is struck who will come up with 2 potential topics for your proposal. You may suggest topics to your supervisor as starting points for their discussion. Based on these suggestions, you choose one and submit a 1-2 page summary of your choice. Once this is approved, you begin to research and write your proposal. After 2-3 weeks, there will be an interim meeting where you present your ideas to date and get feedback from the committee. You are not bound by any of the ideas that you present up until this stage. Seven weeks after your topic was approved, you will submit your research proposal. At least one week after this, you will have your oral exam that begins with a 25-30 min followed by a question and answer session. There will be at least 2 rounds of questions, with each examiner getting up to 15 min each round. The oral presentation and exam will normally take 2-3 hours.

102. WHAT IS THE TIME DURATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

The oral presentation and exam will normally take 2-3 hours.

103. CAN I GET AN EXTENDED DURATION IF I DON'T MEET THE TIMELINE?

If there are extenuating circumstances, students may be allowed to take it later. This is decided on a case-by-case basis.

104. DO I NEED TO CONTINUE MY RESEARCH WORK DURING THE PERIOD OF MY COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

You should discuss with your supervisor, how much time off of lab work you should take. Normally, students stop doing lab work while they are writing their research proposal. However, it is required that you continue attending courses, including BIOC 6999.

105. HOW THE COMPREHENSIVE COMMITTEE WILL BE DECIDED?

In consultation with your supervisor, based on expertise. It is also dependent on the availability of potential committee members.

106. CAN I REVIEW PAST STUDENTS' WRITE-UPS/PROPOSALS BEFORE PREPARING FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

Yes, but be sure that you are reviewing strong proposals. If in doubt, consult your supervisor or the Deputy Head (Graduate Studies)

107. ARE THERE ANY COURSES THAT I CAN TAKE TO PREPARE FOR A COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

All preparation is independent study.

108. HOW CAN I SELECT THE TOPICS FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

You can suggest topics based on your own personal research interests but the final topic choices rest with the committee.

109. WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS OF SELECTING A TOPIC FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

The topic should allow you to propose a novel hypothesis. In addition, you should have at least two aims that are related.

110. HOW CAN I KNOW THE DETAILS/FORMAT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

Yes, please consult with the Deputy Head (Graduate Studies)

4. QUESTIONS ASKED AT THE END OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

111. IS THERE A PAGE LIMIT FOR THE MSC/PHD THESIS?

No, there is no page limit but you should respect your examiners time. Please remember that bloated writing is bad writing and will not impress your examiners.

112. HOW SHOULD I DECIDE THE LENGTH OF THE THESIS CHAPTERS/THESIS?

The length of your thesis will be dictated by the amount and complexity of your data.

113. WHAT STYLE OF THESIS WRITING (MANUSCRIPT/TRADITIONAL/SANDWICH) IS EXPECTED FROM A MASTERS' AND PHD STUDENT? HOW TO COME TO A DECISION?

Any of the styles can be chosen by an MSc or PhD graduate student as long as you have published or submitted some of your work. If you have not submitted or published, you need to write a traditional thesis. You should also consult with your supervisor on the best approach for you situation.

114. WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR WRITING MY MSC/PHD THESIS?

Please see the SGS website for [guidelines](#) on formatting and structure.

115. CAN I CONTINUE MY THESIS WRITING EVEN THOUGH MY REGISTRATION PERIOD FOR THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IS OVER?

No, if you are working on your thesis, you must be registered in the program.

116. DO I NEED TO PAY TUITION FEES WHEN I HAVE COMPLETED THE SEMESTERS AND ONLY WRITING THE THESES?

Yes, if you are working on your thesis, even just writing, you must be registered in the program.

117. HOW DO I GET A THESIS DEFENSE DATE FOR MY PHD?

After you submit your thesis to the Biochemistry graduate secretary, they will organize with SGS to determine a day and time that is suitable for you, your supervisor, and your examiners.

118. WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR THESIS DEFENSE OF MASTER'S STUDENTS? HOW DO I PREPARE?

- a. You and/or your supervisor needs to let the Deputy Head (Graduate Studies) know that you are ready to defend. You will submit your written thesis to your committee at least 2 weeks in advance of the defense date. On the day of the defense, you will give a 20-25 min presentation followed by at least 2 rounds of questions from the audience (5 min) and your supervisory committee (first round 15 min open to the public). A second of questions of 10 min each, will then follow. The second round of questions is not open to the public. Your supervisory committee will then discuss their recommendation for you to submit the thesis for examination.
- b. You should prepare by writing your thesis, which describes your data. You should understand everything that is in your thesis.

119. WHEN THE DURATION OF MY PROGRAM IS UNCERTAIN/THE DATE OF COMPLETION, DO I NEED TO EXTEND MY STUDY PERMIT?

Yes, you must have a valid study permit for the entire duration of your program.

120. WHEN THE DURATION OF MY PROGRAM IS UNCERTAIN/THE DATE OF COMPLETION, DO I NEED TO REGISTER FOR THE NEXT SEMESTER?

Yes, you must be registered as a student for the entire duration of your program.

121. WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF GRADUATION, INCLUDING THE COMPLETION DATE, THESIS SUBMISSION DEADLINE ETC.?

Please see the SGS website on [Theses and Reports](#) for the process for MSc and PhD including deadlines. Aim to submit your thesis 4 months before the convocation you hope to attend.

122. WHEN ARE THE DEADLINES FOR THE THESIS SUBMISSION AND DEFENSE?

Please see the SGS website on [Theses and Reports](#) for the process for MSc and PhD including deadlines.

123. IF I GRADUATE IN THE FIRST MONTH OF A PARTICULAR SEMESTER, DO I NEED TO PAY THE FULL FEE?

No, please see the University Diary for the deadline to withdraw without incurring registration fees.

124. WHERE CAN I FIND A PREVIOUS THESIS FROM THE DEPARTMENT?

PhD thesis published in the department are available in the QEII library or online.