

TRANSDISCIPLINARY SUSTAINABILITY

Building capacity to address the 21st-century transition to sustainability, both globally and locally, is an urgent and complex task, which requires novel partnerships and the integration of expertise from a variety of perspectives. The PhD program in Transdisciplinary Sustainability (TRSU) aims to make a strong contribution to understanding and addressing complex ecological-social-economic-political issues by leveraging the unique strengths of Grenfell Campus and its School of Science and the Environment.

This program trains students to understand and conduct research on sustainability issues through a transdisciplinary approach (i.e. drawing on a broad combination of disciplines and collaborating with external partners). Core TRSU courses focus on holistic conceptualizations of sustainability, complex systems, sustainability science, disciplinary reflection, transdisciplinary research methods, team science, and knowledge co-production with stakeholders. Students are able to pursue their individual interests in sustainability-related issues through a structured but flexible program.

What is Transdisciplinarity?

There are many definitions of transdisciplinarity, but the one used by this program has two main components:

broad interdisciplinarity: integration of disciplines that are conceptually “distant” from one another and are from different scholarly domains – for example, combining biology (natural sciences) with history (humanities) or combining public policy (social sciences) with theatre (fine arts)

co-production: genuine and collaborative involvement of external stakeholders (e.g. from community groups, industries, government agencies, or non-government organizations) as members of the research team

So, any research approach that integrates at least two conceptually distant disciplines and partners genuinely with at least one external partner organization may be considered transdisciplinary.

Courses and Program Requirements

<https://www.mun.ca/university-calendar/school-of-graduate-studies/school-of-graduate-studies/44/40/>

Careers

The TRSU program prepares its graduates for careers as: consultants, researchers, professors, sustainability managers, research scientists, technicians, community planning officers, policy analysts, and more. Due to the transdisciplinary nature of the program, graduates will also possess the broad capacity and familiarity to move flexibly between careers in research institutions, industry, government, and non-government organizations. Of course, the specifics depend on each student’s individual program of study.

Application Procedures and Timelines

The application deadline for a typical September start is February 15. Late application, or applications to start at a different time of year (i.e. January, May), may be considered if a supporting supervisor provides justification for the exception.

Interested students should contact a potential supervisor prior to finalizing their applications. The supervisor's role is essential in helping to establish a student's project, program of study, and committee. As well, the supervisor typically must provide a certain level of top-up funding, and applicants should be aware of whether their proposed supervisor can do so before proceeding with a full application. The potential supervisor should be clearly identified in the answer to Question 1 of the "Statement of Interest" on the application form. No applicant can be given a formal offer of admission until a faculty supervisor has been confirmed.

If a prospective supervisor agrees to supervise an applicant pending admission to the program, the applicant should request that the supervisor send a "letter of support" to the Graduate Officer directly, by the application deadline. The letter should specify how much top-up funding the supervisor will offer to support the student each year (typically at least \$7000 per year over the first three year). The letter of support does not count as one of the two reference letters required for all graduate program applications.

Applications must include a proposal, uploaded to the application portal as an additional document. It should be no longer than 2 pages single-spaced (before references). This proposal does not replace the "Statement of Interest" section in the main application form, which must be completed as well.

The proposal should (using headings) clearly and explicitly explain the project's:

Rationale and significance, research objectives or questions, possible methods (including data collection and data analysis), fit with TRSU program goals, broad interdisciplinarity (what distant disciplines will be involved; how might these disciplines be integrated with one another; who might represent these disciplines on the supervisory committee, knowledge co-production (what external partners might be involved; how might these partners contribute as part of the research team, when in the research process might these partners be engaged) and sustainability (which pillars of sustainability might be involved; how might these pillars be considered in the research project).

If a prospective student is unable to connect with a supporting supervisor, they may submit a general application to go into a continuous "pool" of applicants. Affiliate faculty members may connect with applicants in the "pool" when urgent project needs or funding opportunities arise. However, the ultimate chance of admission is much lower with a general application than with a supervisor-supported application.

Funding

The typical minimum annual funding package for a Transdisciplinary Sustainability PhD student is \$21000, consisting of:

- \$11000 School of Graduate Studies baseline stipend
- \$7000 supervisor top-up funding (stipend or assistantship)
- \$3000 Grenfell Office of Research and Graduate Studies assistantship

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Contact

TRSU Graduate Program Officer: Dr. Garrett Richards

grichards@mun.ca