



**Department of Health, Aging & Society**

**MA Health & Aging Handbook**

**2016-17**

**McMASTER UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, AGING AND SOCIETY  
MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM**

**This Handbook covers the period from September 2016 to August 2017**

The M.A. degree program in the Department of Health, Aging and Society offers students a critical social science perspective and an interdisciplinary approach to the study of health and aging.

**ADMISSION**

Admission to the M.A. degree program requires an average of B+ or better in an undergraduate Honours degree or equivalent. Upon admission, all students will be accepted into the one year course work and major research paper option. Students may apply for the two-year course work and thesis option during their first term of studies.

**DEGREE REQUIREMENTS**

Students will have two options for completing their M.A.

**A. Course Work and Major Research Paper Option (one year)**

This option takes 12 months to complete. It features two terms of course work (six courses) and a Major Research Paper completed under the supervision of a faculty member. All students accepted into the Master's program are placed in this one-year M.A. option by default.

Students will be required to complete six (6) one-term courses, including:

- i) HLTH AGE 701 Social Science Perspectives on Health and Aging
- ii) ONE of: HLTH AGE 716 Quantitative Research Methods in Studies of Health and Aging OR HLTH AGE 714 Qualitative and Historical Methods in Studies of Health and Aging
- iii) Four elective courses offered by Health, Aging and Society or by another department or academic unit (provided that permission has been obtained from those departments or academic units). Only two of the four elective courses may be taken in a department or academic unit other than Health, Aging and Society.
- iv) A research paper (7500-8500 words, excluding references) supervised by a core or associate faculty member. The research paper will be read by the supervisor and another faculty member. If the supervisor is an associate member, then the second reader must be a core faculty member selected by the supervisor in consultation with the student.

## **B. Course Work and Thesis Option (two years)**

Once accepted into the Master's program, students may apply for the two-year degree option that requires course work in the first year (four one-term courses) and a thesis (in the second year) that is based on original research under the supervision of a faculty member.

Students will be required to complete four (4) one-term courses, including:

- i) HLTH AGE 701 Social Science Perspectives on Health and Aging
- ii) ONE of: HLTH AGE 716 Quantitative Research Methods in Studies of Health and Aging OR HLTH AGE 714 Qualitative and Historical Methods in Studies of Health and Aging
- iii) Two elective courses offered by Health, Aging and Society or by another department or academic unit (provided that permission has been obtained from those departments or academic units). Only one of the two elective courses may be taken in a department or academic unit other than Health, Aging & Society.
- iv) A thesis that involves original and independent research (20,000-25,000 words excluding references) supervised by a core faculty member or an associate member if approved by the graduate committee. The thesis will be orally examined by a committee including the supervisor and two other faculty members selected by the thesis supervisor in consultation with the student.

## **FACULTY ADVISORS/SUPERVISORS**

Graduate students in the department's M.A. program are assigned to one of the faculty members, who acts as an advisor/supervisor throughout the duration of the program. The department's faculty research include a wide range of topics, such as: social-cultural dimensions of health and aging; health systems, services and policy; health environments and inequalities.

In addition, the department's associate members can act as instructors for graduate courses HLTH AGE 706 (Independent Study) or HLTH AGE 707 (Reading Course), second readers for the M.A. Major Research Paper, and/or members of a thesis supervisory committee.

**SUGGESTED PROGRAM TIMELINES**

**MA in Health & Aging (1-year option): Major Research Paper**

<b>1-year Schedule: September Admission (Full Time)</b>			
	<b>Term 1 (Sep-Dec)</b>	<b>Term 2 (Jan-Apr)</b>	<b>Term 3 (May-Aug)</b>
<b>Year I: Courses Schedule</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 courses</li> <li>▪ SGS 101 &amp; SGS 201</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SGS 700 (placeholder course)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Major Research Paper Option - 6 courses required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ HLTH AGE 701</li> <li>▪ ONE of: HLTH AGE 716 or HLTH AGE 714</li> <li>▪ Four elective courses:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All 4 electives from HLTH AGE OR</li> <li>▪ 3 electives from HLTH AGE and 1 elective from another department/academic unit*</li> <li>OR</li> <li>▪ 2 electives from HLTH AGE and 2 electives from another department/academic unit*</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>*obtaining permission for courses in another department/academic unit is the student's responsibility</i></p>		
<b>Year I: Major Research Paper (MRP) Schedule</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Informal discussions with MRP supervisor</li> <li>▪ Develop outline &amp; research plan with supervisor</li> <li>▪ <b>December 1:</b> Declare MRP supervisor to Grad Admin Assistant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>January 15:</b> Submit MRP draft proposal with bibliography to MRP supervisor</li> <li>▪ <b>First week February:</b> Supervisor feedback on proposal</li> <li>▪ <b>February 15:</b> Submit MRP Formal proposal (signed by supervisor) to Grad Admin Assistant</li> <li>▪ <b>February 15:</b> Submit ethics application, where appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>June 15:</b> Submit first draft of MRP to supervisor</li> <li>▪ <b>June 30:</b> Draft returned to student with comments</li> <li>▪ <b>June 30:</b> Second reader of MRP selected by supervisor, in consultation with student</li> <li>▪ <b>First Tuesday in August:</b> Submit completed MRP: *electronically to Grad Admin Assistant AND *2 hard copies, coil bound with an acetate cover (PLUS electronically) to supervisor and 2<sup>nd</sup> reader</li> <li>▪ <b>August 31:</b> Grades and comments from supervisor and reader due</li> </ul>

## **Major Research Paper (MRP)**

### **The MRP Process**

In the late Fall Term, students begin work towards their MRP, which is completed during the Summer Term. The MRP is a project consisting of 7500-8500 words (excluding endnotes and bibliography). Students are responsible for selecting a topic for study or research, which must be approved by their supervisor. The topic should be of a scope that is manageable within the deadlines outlined below. The MRP is not a thesis and fieldwork is not required. The MRP should, however, demonstrate a student's ability to integrate ideas that reflect the current state of knowledge on their chosen topic. The MRP must demonstrate critical thinking and expertise at specific, general, and abstract levels.

### **MRP Schedule**

Students and supervisors are strongly advised to draw up a detailed plan indicating when/how they will communicate. Meetings should be in person wherever possible, though it may be necessary to communicate electronically.

1. **Fall Semester:** Informal discussions with MRP supervisor; develop outline and research plan
2. **December 1:** Declare MRP Supervisor to Graduate Admin Assistant
3. **January 15:** Students must declare their "option" choice as the "1-year Masters MRP option" and submit a draft proposal, with bibliography, to MRP supervisor
4. **February 15:** Submit MRP Formal proposal, signed by supervisor, to Graduate Admin Assistant (1000 words -- plus bibliography)
5. **February 15:** Where appropriate, submit ethics application
6. **June 15:** Submit first draft of MRP to supervisor
7. **June 30:** Draft returned to student with comments. Second reader of MRP selected by supervisor, in consultation with student.
8. **First Tuesday in August:** Submit completed MRP (electronically to Graduate Admin Assistant, and in addition, 2 copies, coil bound with an acetate cover (PLUS electronically) to supervisor and 2<sup>nd</sup> reader).
9. **August 31:** Grades and comments from supervisor and reader due.

### **Ethics**

Students whose projects require Ethics Committee approval (i.e., if they involve human or animal subjects of research) should ensure that all communications with the Committees/Boards identify the student and the supervisor, and bear the signatures of both. Ethics application, where appropriate, must be submitted by February 15. More detailed information about the criteria for obtaining Ethics Committee approval can be found at: <http://reo.mcmaster.ca/>.

### **Marking Guidelines**

The MRP is marked on a Pass/Fail basis for transcript purposes. The second reader should send the mark and comments for the MRP directly to the supervisor. Final marks and comments (from BOTH supervisor and second reader) should be submitted BY THE SUPERVISOR to the Graduate Admin Assistant by August 31<sup>st</sup>. The Supervisor shall provide the student with their mark as well as comments from the reader and the supervisor.

If there is a serious discrepancy between the supervisor and the reader (i.e., one marker fails a paper), a meeting of the supervisor and the reader will be convened to resolve and confirm the mark. If no agreement is reached, a third marker, assigned at the discretion of the Chair, will evaluate it.

### **Archiving MRPs for Future Reference**

The Department will keep an archive of past students' completed projects for future students' and supervisors' reference. If the student does not wish to have his/her MRP included in the archive, the student **MUST** submit a written notice to the department by August 31<sup>st</sup>.

## M.A. in Health and Aging (2-year option)

2-year Schedule: September Admission (Full Time)			
	Term 1 (Sep-Dec)	Term 2 (Jan-Apr)	Term 3 (May-Aug)
<b>Year I</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 courses</li> <li>▪ SGS 101 &amp; SGS 201</li> <li>▪ <b>October 15:</b> Declare intent to pursue 2-year option</li> <li>▪ <b>October 15:</b> Develop thesis proposal/study plan with supervisor</li> <li>▪ <b>December 1:</b> Thesis proposal submitted for approval to Graduate Committee</li> <li>▪ <b>December 1:</b> Declare thesis supervisor to Grad Admin Assistant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Thesis Option APPROVED:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 course</li> <li>▪ <b>January 15:</b> Supervisory Committee formed</li> <li>▪ data collection for thesis</li> </ul> </li> <li style="text-align: center;">-- OR --</li> <li>▪ <b>Thesis Option NOT APPROVED:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 courses</li> <li>▪ 1-year option: Major Research Paper (See MRP Guidelines)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SGS 700 (placeholder course)</li> <li>▪ data collection and analysis for thesis</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Thesis Option - 4 courses required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ HLTH AGE 701</li> <li>▪ ONE of: HLTH AGE 716 or HLTH AGE 714</li> <li>▪ Two elective courses:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All 2 electives from HLTH AGE</li> <li style="text-align: center;">OR</li> <li>○ 1 elective course from HLTH AGE and 1 elective course offered by another department/academic unit (<i>obtaining permission is the student's responsibility</i>)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
<b>Year II</b> <b>June (Spring) Convocation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1<sup>st</sup> Draft by 7<sup>th</sup> week of Term 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Final Draft by 7<sup>th</sup> week of Term 2 to supervisory committee</li> <li>▪ Thesis Submitted to Dept (Prior to Defense): mid-March (<i>see Grad Calendar for exact date</i>)</li> <li>▪ Oral defense by end of Term 2 (late March/early April)</li> </ul>	
<b>Year II</b> <b>November (Fall) Convocation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ data collection and analysis for thesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1<sup>st</sup> Draft by mid-May</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Final Draft by mid-July to supervisory committee</li> <li>▪ Thesis Submitted to Dept (Prior to Defense): mid-August (<i>see Grad Calendar for exact date</i>)</li> <li>▪ Oral defense by end of August/first week of September</li> </ul>

## **MA in Health & Aging (2-year option): Thesis**

### **The MA Thesis**

1. All theses must make distinct contributions to knowledge and meet the highest academic standards.
2. Students must declare and discuss interest in the thesis option with their faculty advisor/thesis supervisor by **October 15th of the student's first year**.
3. Students prepare a thesis proposal in consultation with their supervisor. The proposal must contain the following elements: (1) a statement of the problem/research question; (2) background/rationale/theoretical orientation; (3) research methodology; (4) plan and schedule of research/proposed timeline; (5) contribution to existing literature; (6) bibliography. The thesis proposal must be submitted to the supervisor and the Graduate Administrative Assistant by **December 1st of the student's first year**. The proposal must be approved by the department's graduate committee and the student's supervisor.
4. After the thesis proposal has been approved, students submit a Service Request for a Plan Change on Mosaic (request to change academic plan to MA Health & Aging Thesis).
5. Each MA thesis candidate is required to form a three member supervisory committee (comprised of the thesis supervisor and two faculty members) by **January 15th of the student's first year**. The supervisory committee will guide them through all stages of thesis preparation and also participate in the thesis defense.
6. Students are responsible for following the guidelines set by the School of Graduate Studies for the format of the thesis and required number of copies. Students do not receive course credit for preparing the thesis.
7. The oral defense of the thesis will be scheduled only when the supervisory committee approves the thesis as defensible. The defense is scheduled after submission (see below).
8. Previous approval of the written thesis for defense does not guarantee that the student will pass the oral defense.

### **Submission and Defense of Thesis**

1. Once the supervisory committee approves the thesis for defense, the candidate initiates the Master's Thesis Defence Process on Mosaic. The candidate also submits the defensible copy of the thesis to the Graduate Administrative Assistant, who makes one (1) desk copy available in the main office to members of the department.
2. The oral defense is chaired by the thesis supervisor, and the defense is made before an examining committee consisting of the supervisor and two committee members. It is at the discretion of the student and thesis supervisor to allow other members of the department to attend the oral defense.
3. The supervisor usually begins the oral defense by asking the student to give a resume of the thesis, of not more than 15 minutes, highlighting its purpose, methodology, theory, and conclusions.



4. The examining committee then proceeds with their questions. In fairness to the candidate, the supervisor curtails unnecessary or extraneous discussion, and may allow or disallow questions from the audience.
5. At the end of the defense, the examining committee will formally assess the oral defense and the thesis as “Pass” or “Fail.” If the student fails the oral defense, the student may request a second oral defense. If the student fails a second defense, the case will be evaluated by the Graduate Committee.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS AND FUNDING**

The majority of graduate students at McMaster receive competitive funding packages that may include financial support such as teaching assistantships, university graduate scholarships, as well as external scholarships and bursaries.

### **External Scholarship Competitions:**

- Ontario Graduate Scholarships (OGS)
- Canada Graduate Scholarships-Master's (CGS-M) Competition (harmonized SSHRC Master's, CIHR Master's and NSERC Master's)

## **OTHER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

For a complete listing of the policies and procedures pertaining to the Master's degree programs, students are advised to consult the current edition of the School of Graduate Studies calendar at <http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/index.php?catoid=20>. A candidate for the Master's degree must comply with the general regulations and program requirements of the School of Graduate Studies.

## **DEPARTMENTAL CONTACTS**

Graduate Committee:

Dr. Gavin Andrews (Graduate Chair)  
Dr. Amanda Grenier  
Dr. Michel Grignon

Department Administrator:

Lori Ewing

Graduate Administrative Assistant:

Kristine Espiritu

Tel.: 905-525-9140 ext. 27035

E-mail: [espirit@mcmaster.ca](mailto:espirit@mcmaster.ca)

Location: Kenneth Taylor Hall (KTH) Room 226

Department website: <http://www.healthagingandsociety.mcmaster.ca>

## **FACILITIES**

Graduate student offices are located in Kenneth Taylor Hall (KTH) on the 2nd floor. Each office has 6 workstations and is equipped with one (1) desktop computer plus a printer. Each office is shared between AT LEAST 6 graduate students. TAs working for the Department may also use each office. **NOTE:** Since program duration for PhD students is longer than for MA students, designated PhD student workstations have been allocated in each office. PhD workstations are clearly marked and are for the use of PhD students only. MA students (and TAs) share available workstations in each office. Office keys are obtained at the main office of the department (KTH-226) on or after the Orientation Session in September. A deposit of \$13.00 for keys is required (deposit will be refunded when key is returned). Office assignments and keys will be available during the Orientation Session in September.

### **Graduate Student Mailboxes and Photocopier Codes**

Mailboxes for graduate students, as well as the department photocopier, are located in the Department lounge (KTH-215). The access code to the lounge will be available to all graduate students in September. Individual photocopier codes for each graduate student will also be provided in September.