

# Fast-Track Option

## Students admitted as MA 1 / MSc 1: Master's Thesis or Fast Track Paper

Students in the Experimental Program who were admitted as MA 1 / MSc 1 will select one of two options in their second year: Either to submit a Master's Thesis or to submit a Fast Track Paper. Students should discuss these options with their supervisor in their first year.

**1. Master's Thesis Option:** A Master's Thesis can be submitted after at least three semesters of residency. **It must be submitted by April 15 of MA 2 / MSc 2.** It needs to be submitted at the very latest by August 15<sup>th</sup> of MA 2 / MSc 2.

A Master's Thesis should demonstrate good scholarship and research ability. Master's Theses are frequently publishable, and students are encouraged to publish them. However, publishability and originality are not criteria for passing a Master's Thesis and students should not delay completing their Master's degree to meet unnecessarily high standards that are more appropriate to a dissertation. The MA/MSc thesis course numbers are PSYC 690D1, D2 and PSYC 699. **Students who foresee that they will be unable to submit the Master's Thesis by April 15 of MA 2 / MSc 2 need to inform the Graduate Program Director ([Michael Sullivan@mcgill.ca](mailto:Michael.Sullivan@mcgill.ca)) before this deadline, providing a reason for the delay and the expected date of submission.**

Please consult the thesis guidelines (<http://www.mcgill.ca/gps/thesis/guidelines>) for preparation and initial e-thesis submission. Should you have any questions during this process, please contact Chantale Bousquet or Nina Pinzarrone by email at [Psychology.grad@mcgill.ca](mailto:Psychology.grad@mcgill.ca).

Students must go on MyThesis and complete the form called "Intent to submit my thesis" approximately two months prior to the submission of the thesis. Please read carefully all instructions including the ones for the nomination of examiners. The external examiner could be someone from the department, no conflict of interest and the supervisor secures the examiner. **Importantly, students are not permitted to contact the external examiners they intend to nominate.** Master's Theses undergo a formal evaluation by the external examiner, resulting in a 'pass' or a 'fail'.

Students who desire to continue their studies in the PhD program upon completion of their Master's degree must complete an online application form for promotion to PhD 2. They will receive an email informing them when to submit this application by mid-May from the Graduate Program Administrator. **Students' application for promotion into the PhD program will be brought to the department's evaluation meeting in May, where it will be decided to promote the student to PhD 2 if the following criteria are fulfilled: (1) the formal evaluation of the Master's Thesis had a positive outcome, (2) the student's progress in the program is evaluated positively, and (3) the student is evaluated as demonstrating good research potential.**

**2. Fast Track Paper Option:** Students who opt for the Fast Track Paper option must complete a piece of research that meets the criteria for a Master's Thesis. However, the paper summarizing this research needs to be written in the form of a manuscript for a journal. The decision to do the Fast Track Paper option is made by the student and his or her supervisor. The advantage of choosing this option is that the Fast Track Paper can become part of the dissertation. In contrast, the Master's Thesis cannot be included in the dissertation. It can only be seen as a preliminary study, the conclusions of which may provide the basis of doctoral research.

**The Fast Track Paper must be submitted by April 15 of MA 2 / MSc 2.** It needs to be submitted at the very latest by August 15<sup>th</sup> of MA 2 / MSc 2. At the time of submission the student will nominate three professors as readers. One of them will be their supervisor and the other two will usually be professors from the department. One of the nominees may be a professor from outside the department within the Montreal academic community. The paper needs to be submitted via email to the Graduate Program Administrator, who will then distribute them to the nominated readers. If the Fast Track Paper receives a 'pass' evaluation from all three readers, the student is required to make a presentation of their research to a research group in the department (the group needs to include at least the advisory committee members and some graduate students). Students will be required to complete an online application form for promotion to PhD 2. They will receive an email informing them when to submit this application by mid-May from the Graduate Program Administrator.

**Students' application for promotion to PhD 2 will be brought to the department's evaluation meeting in May, where it will be decided to promote the student to PhD 2 if the following criteria are fulfilled: (1) the Fast Track Paper received a 'pass' evaluation, (2) the student's progress in the program is evaluated positively, and (3) the student is evaluated as demonstrating good research potential.**

If the Fast Track Paper is not submitted by August 15<sup>th</sup> of MA 2/ MSc 2 students are automatically expected to submit a Master's Thesis within the next year.

### **Students admitted as PhD 1: Qualifying Paper**

Students admitted as PhD 1 must submit a Qualifying Paper **by April 15 of PhD 2** to be promoted to PhD 3. **The deadlines, procedures and evaluation criteria for submission of a Qualifying Paper are identical with the Fast Track Paper.**

Students admitted as PhD 1 will only submit a Master's Thesis in the **exceptional circumstance** that they and their supervisors are *convinced* that they want to end their studies with a terminal Master's degree. The reason for this is that they will not be allowed to apply to continue on to do their PhD once they switched from the PhD to the Master's program and submitted a Master's Thesis.

**PLEASE FILL OUT THE ATTACHED FORM AND  
RETURN TO GRADUATE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR**

**\*\* DEADLINE IS FRIDAY, March 1, 2024\*\***

My supervisor and I have discussed the options available to me and have made the following decision (please check one):

**I plan to submit a Master's Thesis by April 15, 2024.**

**I plan to submit a Fast Track Paper by April 15, 2024.**

**I plan to submit my Qualifying Paper by April 15, 2024.**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOMINATION OF READERS FOR FAST TRACK/QUALIFYING PAPERS**

Fast Track/Qualifying Papers are evaluated by the student's supervisor and two other readers, using the criteria described on the attached sheet.

You should nominate the **two other readers** for your paper. They should be professors from our department who are knowledgeable in the area of your paper. One of the readers may come from other departments at McGill University or from the Montreal area.

Please write the names of the two readers you nominate below. If they are not from our department, please provide his or her affiliation, phone number, and email address. You should provide the Graduate Program Administrator with an email copy of your Fast Track/Qualifying Paper for distribution to your supervisor and the two readers.

Nominees: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## **FAST TRACK/QUALIFYING PAPER EVALUATION OUTCOMES**

Evaluation of Fast Track/Qualifying Papers is according to the criteria described on the attached sheet. Three outcomes are possible:

1. The paper is judged acceptable, and the student continues working towards the PhD if his or her progress in the program has been satisfactory.
2. The paper is judged unacceptable, but the student is invited to resubmit. This will normally occur when it is judged that the student has completed a sufficient amount of research, but that the paper itself has serious flaws that must be corrected before it can be accepted.
3. The paper is judged unacceptable and the student is not permitted to resubmit. This will normally occur when it is judged that the student has not completed sufficient research to be allowed to proceed directly to the PhD.

If a student is invited to resubmit a Fast Track/Qualifying Paper, it must be resubmitted **within one month of the date** on which the student is notified of this decision. A Fast Track/Qualifying Paper can be resubmitted only once.

Submission of a Fast Track/Qualifying Paper that is ultimately judged unacceptable has no consequences other than reversion to the Master's program.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR FAST TRACK/QUALIFYING PAPERS

According to the rules agreed on by the department, the Fast Track/Qualifying Paper should describe "... research conducted during their first 1.5 years in the program." Following are excerpts from the rules:

An acceptable paper will demonstrate the student's ability to conduct research and report it in a literate style consistent with professional standards as well as show promise of the student's ability to complete a dissertation. The paper will be a report of the student's research written using both the form (i.e., structure, style, length) and the content of a manuscript for submission to an appropriate journal (e.g., *Journal of Experimental Psychology* for empirical reports or *Psychological Review* or *Psychological Bulletin* for theoretical or review papers).

Each of the three readers will grade the paper independently. It must receive a 'pass' from at least two of the readers to be considered acceptable. Each reader should indicate 'yes' or 'no' answers to each of the following questions:

1. Is sufficient original research described in this paper to make a reasonable submission to a good peer-refereed journal in the field?
2. Is the paper written in an acceptable style (considering the description of the methods and results, as well as the introduction and discussion)?
3. Considering that it represents 1.5 years of work, does the overall quality of the document suggest that the author is suited to continue directly to the PhD?

Each reader should write a one-paragraph evaluation of the paper, commenting on any of the following criteria that are either exceeded or not met by the paper.

- Does the introduction include an appropriate review of the literature? Are there any significant omissions or inclusions of irrelevant references?
- Does the introduction do a good job at defining the research question(s) and at explaining how the research to be reported will answer these questions?
- Are the methods properly described, in a manner that allows the reader to understand easily both what was done and its rationale?
- Is the analysis of the data appropriate? Does it answer the questions that are defined in the introduction?
- Does the discussion draw the appropriate conclusions from the results of the research? Are the new findings integrated appropriately with existing knowledge so that the reader feels that something has been gained from reading the paper?
- Does the author express and integrate the major ideas in his or her own words or does the exposition rely heavily on the organization and presentation of other authors?
- Does the author present, define and justify a concluding position with respect to the research question and the issues it raises?
- Is the language appropriate? Does the overall style of the paper correspond to the requirements (essentially APA guidelines)?