

McGill University

School of Religious Studies

Graduate Student Handbook



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This Handbook is intended to *supplement* the extensive information provided by the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies office (GPS) about University policies, procedures, and services. Please spend some time perusing the information on their website at <http://www.mcgill.ca/gps/>.

Important SRS contacts

Address:

McGill University
Birks Building
3520 University Street
Montreal, QC, Canada H3A 2A7
T: 514-398-4121
F: 514-398-6665

SRS Website: <https://mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/>

MA page: <https://mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/graduate/ma>

PhD page: <https://mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/graduate/phd>

1. Graduate Programme Director (GPD): Prof. Torrance Kirby (torrance.kirby@mcgill.ca) office #206, 514-398-4128

The GPD will discuss any aspect of graduate studies with you. In particular, students should inform the Graduate Programme Director of any special circumstances that may be delaying normal progress and any issues with supervisors.

2. Student Affairs Coordinator (SAC): Margaret Lawrence (margaret.lawrence@mcgill.ca), office #107, 514-398-5251

The Student Affairs Coordinator can advise you on programme requirements, tracks student progress through the programme, is responsible for coordinating fellowship applications, coordinates activities related to examiners for thesis submissions and oral defense organization. This is your first point of contact if you have any questions.

3. Administrative/Technical Coordinator: Sami Khan (samieun.khan@mcgill.ca), office # 110, 514-398-4878

Contact the Administrative Coordinator for matters involving room bookings, such as for comprehensive exams and course registration issues.

4. Administrative Assistant: TBD, office #108, 514-398-4125

As a back-up to the SAC, the Administrative Assistant can resolve issues in the absence of the SAC. Additionally, submission of time sheets for casual employees.

5. Administrative Officer: Francesca Maniaci (francesca.maniaci@mcgill.ca), office #112, 514-398-5693

To contact only if none of the above staff members are available to assist you or to schedule a meeting with the Director.

6. General student affairs email account: studaffairs@mcgill.ca

The aforementioned SRS staff members have access to this account, if you're not sure who to go to. This is the email address to submit forms to, including fellowship applications and TA applications.

7. Director, School of Religious Studies: Prof. Garth Green

To request a meeting with the Director, please email Francesca Maniaci first.

8. Religious Studies Liaison Librarian: Sandy Hervieux (sandy.hervieux@mcgill.ca), Humanities and Social Sciences Library, 514-398-1087

The Liaison Librarian can advise you on any aspect of library research or acquisitions at McGill. She holds regular office hours in the School, announced at the beginning of each semester.

Important Note on School-wide Communications and E-mail

University policy requires that all students use their assigned McGill uniform email address for correspondence. Students are responsible for any official communication sent by the School or University officials to that address. For more on the student email policy, see:

<http://www.mcgill.ca/it/policies>.

You will automatically be subscribed with your McGill e-mail address to the SRS listserv SRSGRAD. The School regularly distributes important notices about deadlines, policies, grants, meetings, and such via this listserv.

Supervisor

When you commence the programme, you are assigned an advisor in your letter of acceptance from SRS. This is who the admissions committee believe you are best suited to work with, but who does not have to become your programme supervisor. In the first few weeks of the academic year, you are responsible for determining whom you would like to request to be your supervisor. Supervisors must be full-time tenure-track members of the School. It is the

student's responsibility to arrange to meet their supervisor on a regular basis, and it is the responsibility of the supervisor to guide the student's programme in terms of University and Departmental requirements and the student's interests.

Upon mutual agreement of the student and a prospective new supervisor, the student may elect to change supervisors at any time. You may have a co-supervisor from within or outside the School or at another University. Please consult your supervisor and inform the GPD and SAC of your plans for supervision.

For more on how to choose a supervisor, get the most out of your supervisor-supervisee relationship, etc. see: <https://mcgill.ca/gradsupervision/>.

Supervisory Committee

In consultation with his/her supervisor, each student should determine the composition of his/her individual Supervisory Committee as soon as possible after entering the programme. The members of this committee are usually those involved in supervision of the Comprehensive Examinations. These members are ordinarily the supervisor(s) and one additional professor. The additional professor may later be asked to serve as an examiner or member of the Oral Defense Committee, if appropriate and not in conflict of interest.

Progress Tracking

Early each Fall Term, students meet with their supervisor and the other members of their supervisory committee to map out their objectives for the year. A progress tracking form outlining the agreed upon objectives is submitted to the Student Affairs Coordinator by October 1. This form is designed to evaluate the objectives that he/she had set at the beginning of the previous year in the case of returning students. The objectives for the year include, among others, research objectives, publication and conference plans, and such formal milestones as Comprehensives and Language Requirements as outlined on our website and on **myProgress**. For more on **myProgress** tracking and to find the form, see: <https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/students/research-tracking>.

*Note: at the first meeting with your supervisory committee in your first year, you are expected to complete the mutual expectations form with your committee members. Please submit a copy to the SAC with your progress tracking sheet.

myProgress

A web-based tool that allows graduate students and their supervisors to track and monitor progress towards their degree. Students admitted to a Master's or PhD programme as of Fall 2017 will have access to myProgress.

https://cas.mcgill.ca/sso/login?view=default&service=https%3A%2F%2Fnimbus-ssl.mcgill.ca%2Fgm%2Fj_spring_cas_security_check

Have you taken a class outside of RELG and want it to count towards your programme requirements? Email the Student Affairs Coordinator with your Supervisor's permission (email is sufficient) to count the class. They will enter an exemption on your transcript.

Please note that most language courses (RELG or otherwise) cannot count towards your graduate seminars, only language requirements. The only exception is for higher level Sanskrit, please speak with the GDP and your supervisor before registering for these courses.

Also note that for PhD students, the formal requirement "PhD Seminar" refers to Doktorklub.

Course Registration

All graduate students must register for courses online using McGill's Minerva portal. Students must register for courses in **both** the Fall and Winter terms by the posted deadline dates in order to avoid a Late Registration Fee.

All thesis students must also add Registration Confirmation Courses for each semester. Please use the CRN or course registration numbers found here:

<http://www.mcgill.ca/gps/students/registration/dates>

All incoming graduate students must meet with their advisor either before or during the first week of classes (before the Add/Drop deadline) to discuss course selection and other aspects of their programme.

Courses at the 500, 600, and 700 level are graduate courses. Note that not all of these courses must be RELG, as long as the courses in other departments are agreed upon with the advisor(s). The minimum pass mark in courses is B- for all graduate students.

RELG 645 is a required course for all MA students (only). To be taken in MA 1.

RELG 745 is a required course for all PhD students (only). To be taken in PhD 2.

In order to register for an undergraduate course (ONLY if approved by your supervisor) for the purpose of background information or language requirements, please complete the online form here: <https://www.mcgill.ca/student-records/forms>.

MA Thesis students

All thesis students must also register for Thesis courses. These are not classes that meet every week, but rather represent how many hours per week you should be spending working on your thesis (3 credits = 3 hours, etc). These comprise 27 of your 45 credits in the programme, and you need to register for one per semester (688 = semester 1, 689 = semester 2, etc). If you do not register for these courses, you will not meet the MA programme requirements and will not be able to graduate. These are the courses you have to register for, in the correct order by semester:

RELG 688 Thesis Research 1 3 Credits (semester 1, Fall of year 1)

RELG 689 Thesis Research 2 3 Credits (semester 2, Winter of year 1)

RELG 698 Thesis Research 3 9 Credits (semester 3, Fall of year 2)

RELG 699 Thesis Research 4 12 Credits (semester 4, Winter of year 2)

SRS timeline for PhD students

Milestones and requirements should be closely followed on myProgress. These deadlines are meant to ensure that you graduate on time. Please try to respect them as such.

The basic timeline PhD students can expect is as follows:

PhD 1: Course work (by August 31 Year 1) (6 seminars)

PhD 2: Course work (by August 31st Y2) (4 seminars)

PHD 3: Comprehensives (by August 31st Y3)

PhD 4: 2 Required Languages (by August 31st Y4)

PhD 5: Thesis Proposal (by April 30th Y5)

PhD 6: Doktorklub (by April 30th Y6)

PhD students admitted to PhD 2 are exempt from one year of coursework (known as PhD 1). Those accepted to PhD 1 are expected to take 6 graduate seminars in their first year. Students must take 4 courses in PhD 2, one of which is RELG 745.

SRS timeline for MA-Thesis students

Candidates are required to complete satisfactorily a minimum of six, one-term courses (18 credits) and write a thesis (27 credits) embodying the results of their research.

MA 1: Coursework (including 645), thesis proposal by April 30th

MA 2: Write thesis, finish outstanding coursework if necessary

MA 3 (optional): All or part of this year may be dedicated to thesis writing

We recommend you make use of the summer term to complete any outstanding language requirements you may need. See more below.

Language Requirements

If you have completed credits at another university, you may be able to count towards your language requirements, but this is not done automatically. You must obtain your supervisor's permission to use previously earned language credits for your Language Requirement. You must email the Student Affairs Coordinator (and copy your advisor/supervisor) to make a request to have your previous credits counted. The SAC will verify your transcript (if we don't have an official copy, we may need to ask for one) and process your request. Even if you have completed less than 12 credits at another university, they can count towards your 12 language credits (6 there and 6 here), but please let the Student Affairs Coordinator know.

Mother languages other than English may count towards your language requirements and you do not have to complete an exam. Obtain your supervisor's permission and let the Student Affairs Coordinator know. The same applies if you have completed another university degree in another language (such as French for Quebec students who completed a degree at UdeM or Laval, etc).

Comprehensive Exams

Our website (<https://mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/graduate/phd>) is very thorough on all questions you may have about your comprehensive exams, but the most important thing is to make sure you and your supervisor are in agreement about your tasks and goals. When you are ready to take one of your Comprehensive Exams, please contact Sami Khan to book a room to take the exam.

Thesis Proposal

Guidelines can be found on the SRS website.

Thesis proposals are reviewed and approved/disapproved by the Graduate Programmes Committee. Your thesis proposal must be submitted to the SAC two weeks before the Graduate Programmes Committee meeting (be sure to flag the annual email from the Student Affairs

Coordinator detailing the submission dates). Your proposal must be approved and signed by your supervisor(s). PhD candidates (not MA) must attend the Graduate Programmes Committee meeting to answer questions about their proposal.

Thesis Submission

Guidelines: <https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/thesis/thesis-guidelines> (READ CAREFULLY THROUGH ALL OF THESE PAGES)

Internal/external examiners

MA students need 1 examiner, who can be internal or external to McGill University.

PhD students need 1 internal (McGill) and 1 external examiner.

Process: To initiate this process, speak to your supervisor(s) and agree on 3 potential people for each internal and external (meaning a total of 6 names in the case of a PhD thesis). Then send a ranked list of the names to the Student Affairs Coordinator and the GPD along with their email contact. The Student Affairs Coordinator will also need the title of your thesis, your supervisor(s)' name, and an approximate page length. They will prepare a letter for each of the #1 choices, contact them, wait for them to respond positively or negatively (in which case we repeat the process for choice #2, etc.). All of these examiners will be asked to evaluate their conflict of interest according to the document found on our website and the GPS thesis page.

Please allow for a few weeks before the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Office (GPS) deadlines to make all of this happen. When we have received positive responses, you will be notified and asked to complete the Nomination of Examiner's form (found here: <https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/thesis/thesis-guidelines/initial-submission>). Submit this form with your initial thesis directly to GPS.

You will need the names of the examiner(s) BEFORE submitting your initial thesis. Please plan accordingly.

Initial thesis submission deadlines are August 15, December 15, and April 15. Note that you DON'T have to wait until the last day to submit, all theses are accepted on a rolling basis. After you submit the initial thesis, the examiner(s) will read your work and write a report. Examiners are given four weeks to read and submit their reports.

If you are a PhD student an Oral Defense is required. The examiners' reports will be emailed to you after your oral defense and you will need to make any required corrections or revisions of your thesis before you make your final thesis submission (same as above). You can submit the initial thesis and final thesis in the same semester, but only if there is enough time for the

examiners to write their reports and for you to edit your paper. This is more feasible for MA students, as they are not required to undertake an Oral Defense. For more, see:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/thesis/deadlines>

An Oral Defense is required only for PhD candidates. More on the process here:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/thesis/thesis-guidelines/oral-defence>.

The Oral defense can only be scheduled once GPS emails the Student Affairs Coordinator the Oral Defense form. You will receive the Oral Defense form from the SAC, you will fill it out with your supervisor (check with the admin staff to schedule a date/time), and send it back to the SAC. Note that the student's supervisor is responsible for reaching out to potential internal/external members.

Time Limitation

McGill Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies have established a time limitation for the completion of Masters and Doctoral programmes.

Candidates for the Master's degree must complete the degree requirements (including the submission of the initial thesis) within three years of initial registration. Most Master's theses will be completed in a shorter period of time, namely within two years. A student will be withdrawn from the programme and will not be allowed to register if the thesis is not submitted within three years.

Candidates for the Doctoral degree must complete the degree by the end of PhD Year 7. If you started the programme in PhD Year 2, this means that you have 6 years to complete the degree requirements and to submit your initial thesis. A student will be withdrawn from the programme and will not be allowed to register if the thesis is not submitted by the end of PhD Year 7.

More on programme progression and time limitation:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/students/registration/progress/admission-former-students>

Readmission

You may submit your thesis after MA Year 3 and PhD Year 7. Once your thesis is ready to be submitted you can apply for readmission. You will be readmitted only if your thesis is ready to be submitted to the Thesis Office. There is no cost to apply for readmission, but keep in mind the three annual thesis submission deadlines.

For the readmission process: <https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/students/registration/progress/time-limitation>.

Request for readmission webform: <https://mcgill.ca/student-records/request-readmission>

Note that in the first semester in time limitation, your transcript will read PhD 8; this is to allow students who are almost done to remain active in the system in order to submit their thesis. You are not considered a student, though, and cannot take courses, etc.

Fees and time limitation

This website explains how much time you have to complete your degree and the meaning of the terms on your transcript:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/students/registration/progress/admission-former-students>

MA students are considered full-time for 3 semesters; for PhD students it's through PhD 4. This will affect your tuition and fees: <https://www.mcgill.ca/student-accounts/tuition-fees/tuition-and-fees-tables-and-rates>

Leave of Absence

A leave of absence may be granted by the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for parenting or health reasons. Students must make such a request in writing to the department along with a medical certificate if the leave is for health reasons. The request must be made on a term by term basis, for up to 52 weeks. Once approved by the department, the student completes an online form requesting approval from GPS (<https://www.mcgill.ca/student-records/forms>). For the full regulations, please see:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/students/registration/progress/leave-vacation>

Online Forms for Grad Students

<https://www.mcgill.ca/student-records/forms>

Under the Graduate students tab, you will find the forms to:

- Request a leave of absence

- Request a programme change

- Request readmission

- Request for registration/course changes (this is used to take an undergraduate course, course in another department (if you want it to count to your requirements), register/withdraw after the add/drop or withdrawal deadlines)

- Request a special letter

Request university withdrawal

Funding

The Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies website has information on external awards, eligibility, and details on how to apply, when, etc: <https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/funding/students>

Also keep an eye out for emails forwarded by the Student Affairs Coordinator with various funding opportunities throughout the year, as well as the master Excel file (emailed out yearly) with funding opportunities specific to the School of Religious Studies.

Note that SRS has some internal funding that is awarded to PhD candidates. Internal funding decisions are made based on degree progression (outlined below). Internal funding is distributed at the beginning of each month or the beginning of each semester (see your funding letter). If you need to defer payment of your tuition and fees, see this website for reasons and deadlines: <https://www.mcgill.ca/student-accounts/awards-assistance/tuition-fees-payment-deferral>.

If you have been awarded internal funding, you will receive individual letters by email in June. Please note that SRS does not consider students with substantial external awards (PBEEE, SSHRC, etc.) to be considered for internal funding. This is to better spread out our funding allocations to all of our graduate students.

Tuition

The Student Accounts Fee Calculator is kept up to date with yearly updates to the graduation tuition & fees: <https://www.mcgill.ca/student-accounts/tuition-charges/fallwinter-term-tuition-and-fees/graduate-fees>

Student Standing and Evaluation

Students will be withdrawn from the University if they fail 2 courses, obtain 2 unsatisfactory research progress tracking reports, or fail 1 course and receive 1 unsatisfactory progress tracking report. For more, see the eCalendar policy: https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2018-2019/university_regulations_and_resources/graduate/gps_gi_failure_policy

Issues may sometimes arise owing to your interaction with your supervisor. We encourage you to meet with the GPD or the Director (if the GPD is your supervisor) to discuss any issues or concerns you may have. You may also consult the SAC, the Administrative Assistant, or Administrative Officer.

If you ever have any questions concerning McGill University or Graduate Studies policy, the eCalendar should be the first resort. It is updated every year and constitutes official policy (the eCalendar policies are always right). Here is a link to the Graduate portion of the eCalendar regarding University Regulations and Resources: https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2019-2020/university_regulations_and_resources/graduate

Incomplete Grades

A student may receive an "incomplete" (K) in a course if the requirements have not all been met for legitimate reasons. The professor should advise the student that a "K" will be submitted. Both the student and professor must agree on a date of completion. The student is obliged to submit the required work by the agreed date. Failing that, a "KF" (failure) will be submitted. For more on what a grade means, see the HELP menu in Minerva at the top of your unofficial transcript.

For more on special grades (such as HH, J, L, etc.) see: https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2019-2020/university_regulations_and_resources/graduate/gps_gi_student_records

Reread Policy

According to the Charter of Students' Rights, graduate students may request a reread of an essay or exam paper for 600- and 700-level classes. 500-level courses are subject to the undergraduate reread policy. For more on the process, see:

https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2019-2020/university_regulations_and_resources/graduate/gps_gi_graduate_studies_reread_policy

Lockers & Desks

Lockers in the Birks Building are made available to both graduate & undergraduate students. The locks are the student's responsibility and SRS is not liable for any theft or damage. If you would like to have a locker, please email Stephanie Zazzera with the locker number you've selected. Each summer the locker occupants are asked to vacate them to enable their reassignment for the next academic year.

Work space in rooms 001, 303, and 304 are reserved for SRS graduate students. Please notify Stephanie Zazzera if you'd like to have an assigned desk space. Note that priority is given to PhD students, and MA students are assigned desks if there is space remaining. All desks must be vacated in August so they can be reallocated for the following academic year.

Other resources

Orientation / Transition resources - <https://www.mcgill.ca/cle/services/orientation-transition-grad>

I've Been Accepted page (answers many basic questions) - <https://www.mcgill.ca/accepted/>

Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies website - <https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/>

Post-Graduate Students' Society - <https://pgss.mcgill.ca/en/home>

Handbook of student rights and responsibilities - <https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/>

Key academic dates for students - <https://www.mcgill.ca/importantdates/key-dates>

International Student Services - <https://mcgill.ca/internationalstudents/>

Scholarships & Student Aid - <https://www.mcgill.ca/studentaid/>
(including government aid questions, McGill financial aid, and work study information)

Health services & insurance - <https://pgss.mcgill.ca/en/health-and-dental-plan>

Student Services - <https://www.mcgill.ca/student-services/>

Housing (Graduate) - <https://www.mcgill.ca/students/housing/residence-options/downtown-graduate>
(we also recommend looking for the Housing group within the McGill Facebook group)

Thomson House (social club, home of Post-Graduate Students' Society) - <http://thomsonhouse.ca/home>

McGill Athletics & Recreation - <https://mcgillathletics.ca/>

McGill Bookstore - <https://lejames.ca/>

Parking - <https://www.mcgill.ca/transport/parking/downtown/students>

Fee opt-out information - <https://www.mcgill.ca/student-accounts/tuition-fees/fee-descriptions>

SRS social media

We love to share stories of what our students (and alum) are doing! Feel free to send an email to anyone on the administrative team about recent accomplishments, awards, projects, etc to be featured on our social media accounts and website!

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/McGillSRS>

Twitter - https://twitter.com/McGill_SRS

Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/religious_studies_mcgill/

If you'd like your research topics to be put on our website here
(<https://mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/research/student-research>) please fill out this Google form:
<https://forms.gle/8Z3oN6o5pZqvob7z9>

Common Acronyms

FRQSC Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture / Provincial Research Council

GPD Graduate Programme Director

GPS Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Office

PBEEE Programme de bourses d'excellence pour étudiants étrangers / Provincial Merit Scholarship
Programme for Foreign Nationals

SAC Student Affairs Coordinator

SSHRC Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council