

Environmental Studies PhD

Applying to and Navigating Graduate Studies

GRAD MAP FOR PhD STUDENTS 

Why GRADUATE STUDIES in ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES?

The Earth's environment is stressed, and the search for solutions is anything but simple. Requiring an interdisciplinary approach to problem-solving and education, our program emphasizes the diverse contributions of the natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences to understand and solve environmental problems.

The PhD program meets a growing student demand for post-graduate training relevant to environmental careers in industry, government, and non-governmental organizations. It responds to a strong market in Canada for professionals with environmentally related skills.

Why QUEEN'S?

The PhD program at Queen's University provides graduate level training in the field of Environmental Sustainability by practicing an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the long-term dynamics, impacts, and management of environmental change, the connections between today's decisions and tomorrow's wellbeing, and the strong dependence of human progress on environmental quality.



This program provides opportunities for joint projects with many disciplines at Queen's and RMC, government agencies, and partnerships with community organizations.

Program STRUCTURE

PhD (4 years): seminars, original interdisciplinary research, readings, comprehensive examination, thesis, formal defense.

RESEARCH Areas

- **Environmental Chemistry & Toxicology:** Analysis of chemicals, their pathways and fates in the environment, their effects on plants, animals, and humans, and remediation options.
- **Ecosystem & Human Health:** Application of a systems approach to understanding the impact of human activities on climate change, biodiversity, ecosystem functions, and human health.
- **Society, Culture & Economic Sustainability:** Finding solutions to environmental problems and sustainable living involving the investigation of cultural, social, and economic systems.
- **Past projects have involved:** land-use planning, governance, social justice, Indigenous studies, activism, and environmental philosophy



Visit the [School of Environmental Studies](#) website to read faculty profiles and learn more about faculty members' research areas. When you find a faculty member with similar research interests to yours, contact them and tell them about your interest in graduate work and related experience. Consider meeting with your potential supervisor at departmental events for prospective students. We encourage you to identify a research area of interest and contact a potential supervisor before applying.



GRADUATE STUDIES AND POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS

Environmental Studies PhD Map

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)



YEAR I

ACHIEVE YOUR ACADEMIC GOALS

- Key priorities include forming your committee, coursework, field exams, and language exam.
- Meet early with your supervisor to set expectations and discuss roles, responsibilities, program requirements, resources, research/occupational goals, timelines, and any required accommodation plans.
- Attend and participate in graduate seminars such as ENSC 897: Seminars in Environmental Studies.

MAXIMIZE RESEARCH IMPACT

- Complete CORE online module on research ethics if doing research regarding sensitive topics.
- Apply to SSHRC, OGS, or other funding
- Attend conferences in your field, such as [Water Initiative for the Future \(WatIF\)](#), or [Queen's Sustainability Conference](#).

BUILD SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

- Serve on departmental, faculty, or university committees. Talk to the school Graduate Chair about getting involved.
- Consider positions in student services, the SGPS, or media outlets, like the Queen's Journal, CFRC, and the SGSPA Blog. Look in the [AMS Clubs Directory](#).
- Use a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant position to develop your skills and experience.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

- Consider volunteering with [student groups and initiatives for sustainability](#).
- Use the PhD-Community Initiative to develop leadership and other professional skills and engage in a multi-disciplinary project that serves the greater community.

LAUNCH YOUR CAREER

- Finding a career fit starts with knowing yourself. Take a [Career Services workshop](#) or meet with a career educator and coach for help.
- Start reading publications like [University Affairs](#) and the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#). Browse non-academic labour market websites.
- Stay on the lookout for special events like School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs Career Week to explore your career pathways.

YEAR II

- Priorities include completing your comprehensive examination, pursuing substantive research, and writing your research proposal.
- Set up regular meetings with your supervisor to discuss progress and obstacles to timely completion.
- Find your way through the academic process with the help of [School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs professional development](#).

- Present your work at graduate conferences, through professional associations, or topic conferences.
- Expand your research audience through social media.
- Take part in the Environmental Studies Research Day.
- Apply for the Graduate Dean's Travel Grant for Doctoral Field Research.

- Hone skills for non-academic employment by continuing involvement on committees and in the community.
- Start keeping an ePortfolio of your skills, experiences, and competencies.
- For help with teaching, get support from the [Centre for Teaching and Learning](#). Enrol in SGS902 or the PUTL Certificate for more professional development in teaching and learning.

- Participate in your graduate and professional community through activities such as graduate student outreach programs, organizing conferences, and research groups.
- Consider signing up for the PhD-Community Initiative program run by the SGSPA.

- Start building your teaching portfolio including student evaluations, and seeking mentorship.
- Explore different careers of interest by using [Queens Connects](#) on LinkedIn to connect with Queen's alumni. For more information check out Career Cruising.
- Investigate requirements for professional positions or other opportunities related to careers of interest.

YEAR III

- Continue to meet regularly with your supervisor, review research progress, and write your dissertation. Check out the [SGSPA writing camps](#), such as Dissertation on the Lake.
- Take additional training through the Analytical Research Unit (ARU) on chemical analysis techniques or contamination remediation.
- Begin discussion of potential thesis defence examiners.

- Continue to present at conferences.
- Consider participating in the [3 Minute Thesis \(3MT\)](#) competition.
- Contact the [Queen's Media Centre](#) for guidance on speaking to news outlets about your work. List yourself on the [Arts and Science University Research website](#).
- Present at the [Commerce & Engineering Environmental Conference \(CEEC\)](#).

- Begin teaching as a departmental Teaching Fellow.
- Investigate internships from [MITACS](#) and other sources. Find opportunities for extra training through CTL, School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs professional development, MITACS, or other sources to boost your skills.
- Prepare for work or studies in a multi-cultural environment by taking the Intercultural Awareness Training Certificate hosted by QUIC.

- Do some targeted networking with people working in careers of interest, through Queen's Connects on LinkedIn, the [Queen's Alumni Association](#), professional associations, and at conferences. Get help from a Career Services workshop.

- Participate in hiring committees and attend job talks. Research academic careers of interest. Craft your CV and job application materials.
- Start focusing on non-academic areas of interest. Research organizations of interest and start putting together your industry resume and begin your job search plan.

YEAR IV & TRANSITIONING

- Plan date of thesis submission for examination.
- Present your research to graduate students and faculty or at conferences and work with supervisor to prepare for defence.
- Review submission and examination guidelines.
- Secure necessary oral defence accommodations.

- Continue to attend conferences and connect with scholars in your field and with community partners.
- Continue public outreach through social media and the Queen's Media Centre.
- Attend a major conference in your field, such as the [Annual IUPAC Conference on Green Chemistry](#).
- Consider putting an article in [The Conversation](#).

- Practice articulating the skills you have been developing in settings outside the university, such as casual conversation, networking, and interviews. Get help from a Career Services workshop.

- Consider joining professional associations like the [Ontario Environment Industry Association](#) and the [Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy](#).
- Join groups on LinkedIn reflecting specific careers or topics of interest.

- Build connections with faculty outside of your department such as SERA industry partners.. Pursue interviews for faculty positions and apply for post-doc fellowships and positions.
- Apply to jobs or make plans for other adventures. Get help from Career Services with job searching, resumes, and interviews.
- If considering jobs abroad, research possible immigration regulations. If you are an international student interested in staying in Canada, consider speaking with an [International Student Advisor](#).

WHAT WILL I LEARN?

A graduate degree in Environmental Studies can equip you with valuable and versatile skills, such as:

- **Knowledge and technical skills**
- Effective **communication skills** in multiple forms for diverse audiences
- **Information management:** prioritize, organize, and synthesize large amounts of information
- **Time management:** meet deadlines and manage responsibilities despite competing demands
- **Project management:** develop ideas, gather information, analyze, critically appraise findings, draw and act on conclusions
- **Creativity and innovation**
- **Perseverance**
- **Independence** and experience as a collaborative worker
- **Awareness**, an understanding of sound ethical practices, **social responsibility**, responsible research, and **cultural sensitivity**
- **Professionalism** in all aspects of work, research, and interactions
- **Leadership:** initiative and vision leading people and discussion

WHERE CAN I GO?

A PhD in Environmental Studies can take your career in many directions. In Canada, less than 40% of all PhDs will work in post-secondary education – the majority will work in industry, government, or non-profits.

- **Conservation and management** of natural resources – forestry, energy, aggregates, minerals and metals, natural resources management
- **Environmental protection** – water quality, natural heritage planning, parks management, biodiversity conservation, wildlife management
- **Environmental sustainability** – education, monitoring, restoration, communication and public awareness, sustainable development management, policy and legislation

Taking time to explore career options, build experience, and network can help you have a smooth transition to the world of work after graduation.

How to use this map

Use the 5 rows of the map to explore possibilities and plan for success in the five overlapping areas of career and academics. The map just offers suggestions – you don't have to do it all! To make your own custom map, use the [My Grad Map](#) tool.

Graduate Studies FAQs

How do I make the most of my time at Queen's?

Use the Grad Map to plan for success in five overlapping areas of your career and academic life. Everyone's journey is different - the ideas on the maps are just suggestions to help you explore possibilities. For more support with your professional development, take advantage of the SGSPA professional development framework and the new [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#) process to set customized goals to help you get career ready when you graduate.

Where can I get help?

Queen's provides you with a broad range of support services from your first point of contact with the university through to graduation. Ranging from help with academics and careers, to physical, emotional, or spiritual resources – our welcoming environment offers the programs and services you need to be successful, both academically and personally. Check out the [SGSPA website](#) for available resources.

What is the community like?

At Queen's, graduate students from all disciplines learn and discover in a close-knit intellectual community. You will find friends, peers and support among the graduate students enrolled in Queen's more than 130 graduate programs within 50+ departments & research centres. With the world's best scholars, prize-winning professional development opportunities, excellent funding packages and life in the affordable, historic waterfront city of Kingston, Queen's offers a wonderful environment for graduate studies. Queen's is an integral part of the Kingston community, with the campus nestled in the core of the city, only a 10-minute walk to downtown with its shopping, dining and waterfront. For more about Kingston's history and culture, see Queen's University's [Discover Kingston](#) page.

Application FAQs

What do I need to know to APPLY?

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

- A Master's degree.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- If English is not a native language, prospective students must meet the English language proficiency requirements in writing, speaking, reading, and listening. The following minimum scores are required: (1) TOEFL iBT: Writing (24/30); Speaking (22/30); Reading (22/30); Listening (20/30). Applicants must have the minimum score in each test as well as the minimum overall score, or (2) IELTS: 7.0 (academic module overall band score and a 7.0 for each test band), or (3) PTE Academics: 65, or (4) CAEL CE -70 (minimum overall score).

KEY DATES & DEADLINES

- **Application due:** February 1st.
- **Notification of acceptance:** As soon as possible after receiving the full application.

Before you start your application, please review the [Graduate studies application process](#).

What about FUNDING?

The minimum funding guarantee for Environmental Studies PhD students is \$21,000 per year, throughout years 1-4. This basic level of funding is pro-rated based on the duration of study. Your overall financial support will consist of graduate awards, external scholarships, internal fellowships and bursaries, teaching and research assistantships, research grants, and/or support from the School of Environmental Studies.

We encourage all students to apply for external funding from OGS, SSHRC, and other sources. Queen's will automatically issue a one time \$10,000 award to Doctoral students who have won federal government tri-council awards. For more information, see the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs' information on [awards and scholarships](#).



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