Application FAQs

What do I need to know to APPLY?

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS
- Master's degree in Cultural Studies or a related discipline from a recognized university.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS
- Writing sample.
- Statement of Interest.
- Video documentation of relevant work (if applicable).
- CV.
- Demonstrated proficiency in a language other than English (if needed).
- If English is not a native language, prospective students must meet the English language proficiency requirements in writing, speaking, reading, and listening. The School of Graduate Studies requires the following minimum scores: TOEFL (paper-based): 550, (2) TOEFL iBT: Writing (24/30), Speaking (22/30), Reading (22/30); Listening (20/30), for a total of 88/120 (applicants must have the minimum score in each test as well as the minimum overall score), or (3) IELTS: 7.0 (academic module overall band score), or (4) PTE Academic: 65.

KEY DATES & DEADLINES
- Application due: January 31st to qualify for funding.
- Notification of acceptance: March 31st.

What about FUNDING?

The minimum funding guarantee for Cultural Studies PhD students is $20,000 per year, throughout years 1-4. The funding package may be comprised of Queen’s Graduate Awards, Teaching Assistantships, and named internal Fellowships.

We encourage all students to apply for external funding from OGS, SSHRC and other sources. Queen's will automatically issue a $11,000 award to incoming PhD students who have won federal government tri-council awards. For more information, see the School of Graduate Studies’ information on awards and scholarships.

Why GRADUATE STUDIES IN CULTURAL STUDIES?

Cultural Studies is graduate school reinvented for the 21st century. We are a self-governing, interdisciplinary graduate program for people who want to develop the tools to critically understand the world, and change it. The complexity of contemporary culture means that more than ever before society needs people trained in multiple disciplines, theories and practices. We work with communities throughout and beyond the university to create new forms and methods of research that could not be done in traditional departments. Our students write plays and curate exhibitions. They travel to Argentina, China and Turkey for their research. They win the highest academic accolades, including Fulbright and Vanier scholarships.

What unites all these diverse research agendas is our passion for social justice. We believe that all our research should be in some way be capable of addressing real world problems. Students work with indigenous peoples, artists, students, prisoners and activist groups to bring about social transformation. They also conduct artistic research-creation, and present their work in a variety of media. When they graduate, our students have superior intellectual tools and practical skills that will last them a lifetime outside of the university.

Why QUEEN’S?

Comprising 100 students and 90 distinguished faculty from 22 disciplines, Cultural Studies is an innovative and growing interdisciplinary research program. Our programs include opportunities for cultural production and community-activist fieldwork as options alongside traditional academic research. We are also committed to a diversity of students and faculty and to the global expertise that they bring to the cultural and academic fields. Students participate equally with faculty in the program’s governance.

RESEARCH Areas
- African Studies
- Asian Studies
- Critical Canadian Studies
- Critical Race Theory
- Environmental Humanities
- Europe and the Mediterranean
- Film, Media and Visual Arts
- Gender and Queer Theory
- Indigenous Arts and Politics
- Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies
- Law, Prison, and Justice Studies
- Museum Studies and Curation
- Music and Sound Art
- Postcolonialism and the Global South
- Religion, Culture and Spirituality
- Science, Technology and Society
- Theatre and Performance
- Urban Studies

I valued the freedom to research what I wanted how I wanted without having to appease the disciplinary sensibilities of a committee who was set in their ways.”
- Sharday Mosurinjohn, PhD

We encourage you to identify an area of research interest and contact a potential supervisor before applying. Visit the Cultural Studies Program website to view faculty profiles and learn more about faculty members’ research areas. When you find a faculty member with similar research interests to yours, contact him/her and tell them about your interest in graduate work, area of research interest and related experience. Consider meeting with your potential supervisor at program events for prospective students.

Program STRUCTURE

PhD (4 years): 4 full-term courses, qualifying exams, and thesis or project.
YEAR I
- Key priorities in the fall and winter include completing your coursework, and attending the Cultural Studies Colloquium (CUST 802/902).
- Meet early with your supervisor to set expectations and discuss roles, responsibilities, program requirements, resources, research/occupational goals, and timelines.
- Take advantage of the summer to form your supervisory committee and prepare for your qualifying exams.
- Consider studying abroad with an exchange partner.
- Complete your qualifying exams in the fall. Write and defend your thesis or project proposal in the winter. Embark on your substantive research in the summer.
- Find your way through the academic process with the help of the Expanding Horizons - Student Academic Success Services.
- Set up regular meetings with your supervisor to discuss progress and obstacles to timely completion.
- Complete the annual Report Form for your supervisor.

YEAR II
- Continue to meet regularly with your supervisor, review research progress, and write your dissertation. Check out the SGS Dissertation Boot Camp or Dissertation on the Lake.
- Use conference presentations to discuss your work, and explore ways to disseminate research findings. Learn from the Expanding Horizons Publishing workshop.
- Begin discussion of potential thesis defence examiners.
- Complete your qualifying exams in the fall. Write and defend your thesis or project proposal in the winter. Embark on your substantive research in the summer.
- Complete your dissertation and thesis work. Present at conferences and work with supervisor to prepare for defence.
- Review submission and examination guidelines. Submit your thesis or project on OSFSPACE.
- Discuss career pathways, references letters, and publication options with your supervisor.

YEAR III
- 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.
- Archive your thesis or project on OSFSPACE.
- Discuss career pathways, references letters, and publication options with your supervisor.

YEAR IV & TRANSITIONING
- 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.

WHAT WILL I LEARN?
A graduate degree in Cultural 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
- Persistence
- Independence and experience as a collaborative, social and ethical thinker
- Awareness: an understanding of the social, cultural, political, and economic contexts of the world
- Professionalism in all aspects of work, research, and interactions
- Leadership: initiative and vision leading people and discussion

WHERE CAN I GO?
A PhD in Cultural 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.

- Academia and teaching
- Non-profit agencies
- Media
- Museums and galleries
- Civil Service
- Publishing houses
- Social policy agencies
- Taking time to explore career options, build experience, and network can help you have a smooth transition to the world of work after graduation.