Applying to and Navigating Graduate Studies

Why GRADUATE STUDIES in PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCES?

Graduate students and their work are an important part of ongoing research that helps us understand natural, cultural, imaginative, social, technological, and health phenomena. In the PhD program in Public Health Sciences, students gain skills to communicate scientifically, describe trends and patterns of health and illness, critically review scientific literature, collect and analyze data, and more.

The goal of the Public Health Sciences PhD program is to graduate individuals who are capable of functioning as independent investigators within academic (or equivalent) research positions, or who can occupy positions of professional leadership in public health- or health-related agencies where research is an important function.

The PhD program offers a general track or has specializations in Epidemiology or Biostatistics. Students in the general track study diverse public health topics including those related to health economics, health policy, global and population health, among others. These students collect and use a variety of types of data and research approaches depending on their own interests and the expertise of their Supervisor(s).

Students in the Epidemiology specialization will study advanced epidemiologic methods and biostatistics and conduct a thesis using those methods. Research topics are broad, including disease etiology, clinical epidemiology, health services research, and more. Students in the Biostatistics specialization will study advanced biostatistics methods and epidemiology and conduct a thesis using those methods. Research topics and methods covered by this specialization include statistical methodological research in the context of public health, biomedical, or clinical studies.

Why QUEEN’S?

At Queen’s, we have world class researchers and instructors who provide exceptional learning and mentorship for doctoral students on an historic campus in the heart of Kingston. The relatively small size of our program allows students to get to know faculty members and each other very well. PhD students take on leadership roles in the Department frequently acting as Teaching Assistants for graduate level courses and getting involved in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Kingston is a wonderful city to live, learn, and play in right on the shores of Lake Ontario. There are many affordable housing options for graduate students and upper year students who are always will to share their knowledge and expertise!

Program STRUCTURE

PhD (4 years) with an option to remain in a general track or specialize in Epidemiology or Biostatistics. Each student completes at least 4 courses, comprehensive exam, and a dissertation.

Research AREAS

There are many research areas including:

- Biostatistics
- Cancer Epidemiology
- Clinical Epidemiology
- Global Health
- Health Economics
- Health Equity
- Health Services & Policy Research
- Mental Health
- Physical Activity Epidemiology
- Population Health
- And more!

Visit PhD Public Health Sciences to learn about faculty members who are accepting students and their 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.

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Public Health Sciences

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)

2023-2024

ACHIEVE YOUR ACADEMIC GOALS

YEAR I

• Key priorities include completing required
  health and safety and animal research
  ethics training, any required coursework, and
  your comprehensive exam.

• Meet early with your supervisor to set
  expectations and discuss roles, responsibilities,
  program requirements, resources, research/occu-
  pational goals, timelines, and any required
  accommodation plans.

YEAR II

• Set up regular meetings with your supervisor to
  discuss progress and obstacles to timely completion.

• Priorities include completing your research outline
  and proposal, and pursuing research.

• Check out School of Graduate Studies and
  Postdoctoral Affairs professional development
  workshops and SGSPA website for guidance through
  the academic process.

YEAR III

• Continue to research and write your dissertation.
  Check out the SGSPA Dissertation Boot Camp.

• Consider publishing elements of your research.

• Use conference presentations to create and
  refine dissertation material.

YEAR IV

• 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.

• Discuss career pathways, references letters, and
  publication options with your supervisor.

MAXIMIZE RESEARCH IMPACT

• Think about audiences for your research.

• Apply to CIHR, NSERC, OGS, and other funding.

• Attend conferences in your field.

• Start to present your work at graduate conferences,
  through professional associations, or topic
  conferences.

• Expand your research audience through social
  media.

• If appropriate, apply for the Dean’s Travel Grant for
  Doctoral Field Research other awards.

BUILD SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

• Serve on departmental, faculty, or university
  committees. Talk to the SGSPA for tips on getting
  involved.

• Consider positions in student services, the
  SGSPA, or media outlets like the Queen’s Journal
  CFRC and the SGSPA Blog - Gradifying. Look in
  the AMS Clubs Directory.

• Use a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant
  position to develop your skills and experience.

• Home skills for non-academic employment by
  continuing involvement on committees and in
  community.

• Start keeping an eportfolio of your skills,
  experiences, and competencies.

• For help with teaching, get support from the Centre
  for Teaching and Learning. Enroll in the PUTL
  certificate for more professional development in
  teaching and learning.

• Find opportunities for extra training through
  CFTL, SGSPA professional development, MITACS, or
  other sources to boost your skills.

• Investigate internships from MITACS and
  other sources.

• Prepare for work or studies in a multi-
  cultural environment by taking the PUTL and
  FDIS’s Training Certificate.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

• Explore how you can connect with your
  community and use your experiential opportunities
  on- and off-campus.

• Consider volunteering with different community
  organizations, such as the Queen’s Cancer
  Research Institute or KFL&A Public Health.

• Attend the seminar series put on by the Centre
  for Neuroscience Studies.

• Participate in your graduate and professional
  community through activities such as graduate
  student outreach programs, organizing
  conferences, and research groups.

• 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.

• Consider joining one of the many professional
  associations like the Canadian Public
  Health Association, the Canadian Society
  for Epidemiology and Biostatistics, or the
  Canadian Cancer Foundation.

• Continue targeted networking with people
  working in careers of interest. Join groups on
  LinkedIn reflecting specific careers or topics.

LAUNCH YOUR CAREER

• Finding 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
  Graduate Student Career Forum to explore your
  career pathways.

• Start building your teaching portfolio including
  student evaluations, and seeking mentorship.

• Explore different careers of interest by reading
  alumni profiles on the SGSPA website, and using
  Queen’s Connects on LinkedIn to connect with
  Queen’s alumni, or find alumni in various careers
  through Ask an Alumni. For more information check
  out Career Counseling.

• Investigate requirements for professional positions
  or other opportunities related to careers of interest.

• 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.

• Build connections with faculty outside of your
  department. Pursue interviews for faculty
  positions and apply for post-doc fellowships and
  positions.

• Apply to jobs or make plans for other adventures.

• Chat with Career Services on 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 Public Health Sciences can equip you with valuable
and versatile skills, such as:

• Knowledge and technical skills
• Effective communication skills

WHERE CAN I GO?

A PhD in Public Health Sciences can take you career in many directions.
In Canada, about 40% of all PhDs will work in post-secondary education
the rest will work in industry, government, or non-profits.

• Academic labs
• Administration in academic, health care or government
  settings
• Health Care (Hospital clinical labs)
• Research labs
• Scientific supply companies
• Teaching positions in academic institutions or the private sector
• Technical positions in academic institutions or the private sector

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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.

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Application FAQs

What do I need to know to APPLY?

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS
• Master’s degree in health sciences, epidemiology, biostatistics, statistics, health promotion, health geography, economics, or a related discipline.
• Demonstrated research competency, usually through a research-based thesis or a research project with peer-reviewed publication.
• Grade requirements: First-class academic standing (equivalent GPA of 3.7 or 80%).

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS
• Statement of Interest (including area of research and potential supervisor).
• Transcripts and CV.
• Applicants with non-thesis based Master’s training may include published, in-press, or under review research papers as documentation of academic research experience.
• 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: 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 Academics: 65.

KEY DATES & DEADLINES
• Application due: January 31. Late applications will be considered until all positions are filled.
• Application review begins in mid-February.

Before you start your application, please review the PHS website and reach out to potential supervisors. Please also be familiar with the Graduate studies application process.

What about FUNDING?

The department guarantees a minimum funding package of $20,000 per year for every PhD student. There are also opportunities to compete for internal/external awards and take on paid research or teaching assistantships. For more information on internal and external awards please see the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs’ information on awards and scholarships.