



RES POLICY ON “FAST-TRACKING” – June 12, 2017

This document outlines the RES policy on the process by which MA/MSc students can transfer into the PhD program without having completed requirements of the master’s program (“fast-tracking”). The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS) provides minimum criteria for fast-tracking, appended below. RES requires students considering fast-tracking to meet these criteria in addition to RES-specific criteria.

Context

“Fast-tracking” is not encouraged for RES students. The experience of faculty and previous students indicates that for most students, completing a master’s degree before starting the PhD program is beneficial: the master’s thesis allows students to gain the experience and skills associated with undertaking a substantial research project; and the master’s program allows students to explore and define their interests before committing to additional years of doctoral study. The latter is especially important for RES students, who are generally new to interdisciplinary studies and pursuing areas different from their undergraduate training.

As “fast-tracking” is not the RES norm, master’s students should not feel pressured in any way to embark on it. It is permitted, however, in exceptional cases (see Criteria below).

Criteria

Requests for “fast-tracking” will be considered with reference to the following criteria:

- *Exceptional academic potential* – as demonstrated in a strong academic record and a strong letter from the supervisor. Performance in coursework must meet, and preferably exceed, G+PS requirements regarding grade point averages for “fast-tracking.”
- *Clear evidence of research ability* – as indicated in the supervisor’s letter, publications, etc.
- *An established relationship with the supervisor* – the PhD supervisor must be sufficiently familiar with the student’s research interests and capabilities. The student must have a strong relationship with the supervisor.
- *Planned thesis project* – the student must have a thesis project planned and appropriately underway that is PhD-level in scope and outcome; that is, all evidence must suggest that the planned work be of PhD level.
- *Uncomplicated academic history* – complications include changing supervisors, leaves of absence, etc.
- *Availability of funding* – a plan for having or seeking funding at the 4YF level should be in place.



Procedure

If all of the above criteria are deemed by the supervisor(s) as met or fulfilled, and the student and supervisor agree that “fast-tracking” would be in the student’s best interests, the student/supervisor should complete the following steps:

1. The student should develop a fast-track/PhD application, to be submitted to the Admissions Committee, before the normal admissions deadline. This application package will not be the official PhD application, but should include the following:
 - a. A PhD proposal, including timeline
 - b. Rationale and case for fast-tracking *
 - c. Letter of support from the supervisor, including relevant funding information
 - d. The Graduate Program Manager will add transcripts and original letters of reference from the student’s master’s application.

*The rationale and case for fast-tracking should include information on whether the student will meet G+PS guidelines for fast-tracking after one year in the master’s program (see [here](#) and below).

2. The Admissions Committee will then consider the applicant for admission to the PhD program along with the other applicants, and, if appropriate, consider the applicant for consideration for awards.

As per IRES policy, all offers of admission require guaranteed four years of funding at the 4YF level. The student/supervisor must confirm that this funding is available.

3. If admitted, the student should apply to G+PS to fast-track in the summer (after having completed and received grades from Winter – Term 2).
4. If G+PS approves, the student will be formally admitted to the PhD program in September. It’s important to note that the PhD start date will be considered the start date of the original master’s degree.

G+PS Requirements

Students may be eligible to transfer from a master’s program into a related doctoral program (“fast track”) if they have completed the following requirements:

- Hold a bachelor’s degree, and have completed a minimum of one year of study in a master’s program with 9 credits at the 500-level or above and of first class standing (80% or better).

Also:

- (for Ph.D.) clear evidence of research ability or potential;
- (for Ed.D.) first class standing and first class standing in such prerequisite work as may have been required, and five years professional experience; or
- (for D.M.A.) outstanding ability in performance or composition.

Transfer directly into a doctoral program is normally accomplished after completion of the first year of study at the master's level and will not be permitted after completion of the second year. Transfers may not be retroactive.

Students must be in good academic and financial standing.

If a student transfers from a master's program to a doctoral program without completing the master's degree, the start of the doctoral program will be the date of first registration in the master's program.