Master of Applied Health Services Research

Overview

This program is intended for students who are interested in pursuing a career in health research. The Master's Degree in Health Services Research is a collaborative venture of Memorial University of Newfoundland, the University of New Brunswick, St. Mary's University, and the University of Prince Edward Island, and is coordinated through the Atlantic Research Training Centre (ARTC). The degree program provides knowledge and skills necessary to tackle complex health policy issues and contribute to the future of health services in Atlantic Canada.

Program Requirements

A) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Students complete three compulsory courses and attend three themed workshops, three elective courses, and a thesis.

Compulsory Courses
• AHS 6003 - Research & Evaluation Design and Methods
• AHS 6004 - Determinants of Health: Healthy Public Policy
• AHS 6008 - Advanced Qualitative Methods OR AHS 6009 - Advanced Quantitative Methods
• Three themed workshops (scheduled throughout the degree program)

Elective Courses

• AHS 6001 - Canadian Health System
• AHS 6002 - Ethical Foundations of Applied Health Research
• AHS 6005 - Policy and Decision Making
• AHS 6007 - Knowledge Transfer and Research Uptake
• AHS 6110 - Directed Studies
• AHS 6120 - Work Integrated Learning

Thesis

• AHS 6010 – Thesis

Review of Progress
At the end of each semester, the academic record and progress of each student will be reviewed by the Science Graduate Studies Coordinator. The candidate must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 or an average of 75% or higher in order to maintain registration in the program.

B) GRADES SCHEDULE
In the courses which comprise a part of the student's program, standings will be reported according to the following schedule of grades:

• First class standing: 80 per cent and higher
• Second class standing: 70 to 79.9 per cent inclusive
• Pass standing: 60 to 69.9 per cent inclusive
• F: a graduate student who receives a grade of less than 60 per cent in any course (graduate or undergraduate, prescribed or additional) is deemed to have failed the course.
• INC: students who fail to complete all components of a course, such as assignments, examinations and laboratories, due to circumstances beyond their control (such as illness) may, with the permission of the Professor, Chair and Dean, be granted an amount of time deemed reasonable for the completion of said components. If a student does not complete all the components of a course by the agreed-upon date, normally a grade of F shall replace INC on the transcript. Nevertheless, in cases where the component left incomplete was not a requirement for passing the course and where the student already has earned a passing grade without completing the component, the passing grade shall be submitted and shall replace INC on the transcript.
• AUD: an “audited” course (additional courses only)
• DISC: discontinued with permission

C) THE THESIS

Research
Normally, the equivalent of 12 months of continuous study must be devoted to research in fulfilment of the thesis requirement. In order to complete the degree within a reasonable time frame, the research topic should be identified and approved by the Supervisory Committee by the second semester of the students' program. Research involving human subjects must be approved by the University’s Research
Ethics Board.

Students will prepare a thesis proposal that outlines the particular area to be investigated. Normally this will happen during the first year of the program. An academic defence is required and, in addition, students will make a public presentation of their thesis research.

**Supervisory Committee**
The supervisory committee is composed of the supervisor (or co-supervisors) who are graduate faculty, and at least two other graduate faculty members. All members of the supervisory committee are expected to participate actively in the student program.

**Thesis**
Each candidate for the degree of Master of Applied Health Services Research is required to submit a thesis based upon research conducted under supervision as described in this section of the calendar. The thesis must demonstrate the student’s mastery of skills and show potential for original and independent research.

General specifications as to paper, format, order, and binding are available from the Science Graduate Studies Coordinator.

The student should consult frequently with the Supervisor and the Supervisory Committee when preparing the thesis. The final draft of the thesis, after it has been approved by all members of the Supervisory Committee, is sent for examination to the members of the Master's Examination Committee (see below).

**The Master's Examination**
The final oral examination, devoted chiefly to the defence of the thesis, is an examination identified as the Master's Examination and carried out by the Master's Examination Committee.

The Science Graduate Coordinator selects the Examination Committee at the request of the Supervisor. The Examination is normally open to the public; however, members of the audience may only question the candidate upon invitation of the Chair of the Committee.

The Examination is passed and the thesis approved if there is no more than one negative vote, an abstention being regarded as a negative vote. The Science Graduate Studies Coordinator records the result as “unsatisfactory” or “satisfactory.” If the result is “unsatisfactory,” the candidate may be given the opportunity by the Master's Examination Committee of a second attempt. A second “unsatisfactory” result will terminate candidacy at this university.

The Master's Examination Committee normally consists of five members as follows:

- Three members of the Supervisory Committee, including the Supervisor of the candidate's research;
- One member of the area of specialization but from a department other than that of the student’s supervisor. This external examiner may be from the University of Prince Edward Island, or from another University or Research Institute, as is deemed appropriate;
- The Coordinator of Graduate Studies (or designate), who will Chair the Master's Examination Committee.

**Submission of Thesis**
Following the Master's Examination, the candidate, if successful, arranges for the preparation of the thesis in final form, and for its submission to the Science Graduate Studies Coordinator. The thesis in final form must include any corrections or revisions indicated during the Examination. Approval of the thesis takes the form of a Certificate of Approval, signed by the Examination Committee. The Graduate
Studies Coordinator for Science must inform in writing the Registrar’s Office when the student has fulfilled all requirements of the degree.

Copyright Provision
Copies of the thesis shall have on the title page the words, “In partial fulfilment of requirements for the degree of Master of Applied Health Services Research.” The international copyright notice, which consists of three elements in the same line - the letter “C” enclosed in a circle; the name of the copyright owner (the student); and the year - should appear as a bottom line on the title page of the thesis.

Retention/Maintenance of Records
In the interests of good scholarly practice and in order to substantiate claims of intellectual property, graduate students should keep complete, dated records of their research. These records may be in the form of bound notebooks, log books, or other documentation, as appropriate to the discipline. Students should also retain copies of significant drafts and notes, and of all material submitted for evaluation, presentation, publication, or by the way of informal contribution to collaborative research projects. They must also ensure that raw data and other research results should remain accessible at all times to all other members of any collaborative research activity.

Unacceptable Thesis
If a candidate is unable to prepare an acceptable thesis, the Supervisory Committee will report this to the Science Graduate Coordinator (sending to the student a copy of the report).

Transcripts of Records
Official transcripts of the student’s academic record are available through the Registrar’s Office. Transcripts will be sent to other universities, to prospective employers, or to others outside the University only upon formal request by the student.

Careers: Director of Resident Care
Hospital Administrator
Professor
Communications Officer
Counsellor

Example Courses: AHS 601 - Canadian Health System
AHS 604 - Policy and Decision Making
AHS 606 - Qualitative and Quantitative Methods
AHS 608 - Advanced Qualitative Methods

Course Level: 6000 Level

Courses: AHS-6001 Canadian Health System
This course proposes to give an overview of the history of the Canadian Health System and its current organization, as well as an overview of other international health system models. The key concepts that will be explored in the Canadian Health System include legislation, institutions, funding structures, human resources, and guiding values. Other issues examined will be the factors affecting health services utilization, the measurement of health outcomes and their use for accountability, and a review of health information systems in Canada and the structures and instruments within them. Finally, current issues and trends relating to the Canadian Health Care system will be reviewed.
3 hours credit

AHS-6002 Ethical Foundations of Applied Health Research
This course will acquaint students with the ethical basis of health research, as well as the substantive
issues that arise at the macro, meso, and micro levels in the design and conduct of research. A variety of approaches to ethical decision-making will be surveyed, with particular attention given to how various approaches might apply in the context of Atlantic Canada. Standard topics will be explored in this course, such as informed consent, privacy and confidentiality of health information, and conflicts of interest. Special attention will be given to issues of rural/urban split, respect for the integrity of communities, and the potential abuse of expert or professional authority.

3 hours credit

**AHS-6003 Research & Evaluation Design and Methods**

In this course, students will become familiar with the research process, with the basic aim of developing skills to critically evaluate the work of others and to understand possible approaches in the design of their own research projects. The initial emphasis in the course will be on formulating research questions and determining strategies that may be used to address a particular research theme. As the course unfolds, the approach will switch to understanding how various qualitative and quantitative research techniques may be used to address research questions that the students have posed.

3 hours credit

**AHS-6004 Determinants of Health: Healthy Public Policy**

This course will explore the development of the philosophy of the determinants of health, and identify the determinants of health and their relationship with health status. As the course unfolds, students will gain an understanding of the philosophical underpinnings, as well as understanding their inter-relationships. An understanding of the complexity of developing healthy public policy that addresses multiple determinants of health will be developed by students, as well as the consideration of the implications of policy from the perspective of the determinants of health.

3 hours credit

**AHS-6005 Policy and Decision-Making**

In this course, students will explore the process of how Canadian Health Policy is developed, implemented, and evaluated. This course will also assist in building skills in the areas of research approach, critical appraisal, policy synthesis, and briefing notes. The course will follow a case-based approach to understand the implications of political, social, ethical, and economic policy.

3 hours credit

**AHS-6007 Knowledge Transfer and Research Uptake**

This course will explore the facilitators and barriers of using evidence in decision-making, as well as developing the students’ understanding of the conceptual, philosophical, and theoretical underpinnings of knowledge transfer and research uptake. Students will also learn how to create ongoing/sustainable linkages with decision-makers and how to share research findings with academic and non-academic audiences. The course strengthens the program by providing students with skills to interact with stakeholders and facilitate the use of evidence in decision-making. Topics explored include Evidence-Based Decision-Making-barriers and facilitators, and why evidence is not used in decision-making. The course will look at how to encourage decision-makers to use research evidence through behavioural change, social marketing, and sustainable linkages.

3 hours credit

**AHS-6008 Advanced Qualitative Methods**

In this course, students will gain an understanding of the use of qualitative research methods in applied health research. Students’ skills will be developed in the analysis of qualitative data, grant-proposal writing using qualitative data, and the critique of qualitative research. Topics explored include issues in qualitative approaches such as subjects/participants, ethical issues, representativeness, data trustworthiness, bias/perspective, researcher as an instrument, the designing of an analysis template, concurrent/non-current, and ethnography. Other topics explored include theoretical approaches to analysis, such as conflict analysis, feminist, deconstructionalist, thematic analysis, participatory action research, grounded theory, and case studies.

3 hours credit

**AHS-6009 Advanced Quantitative Methods**

This course will expose students to a variety of more advanced quantitative and statistical approaches to research methodology. The two main purposes of the course are to provide students with the tools to conduct advanced quantitative empirical research, and to further develop their ability to critically evaluate the work of others. Students will learn to examine issues and develop research strategies to
begin to identify and answer important topics that need to be researched, and students will design a realistic appraisal of what can and cannot be achieved, given resource constraints.

3 hours credit

**AHS-6010 Thesis**

Each student in the Master of Applied Health Services Research program is required, under the supervision of a Faculty Advisor and Supervisory Committee, to write a thesis based on research into an approved topic. It must demonstrate the candidate's ability to conduct original independent work, and include a critical evaluation of the principal works published on the subject of the thesis. It should make an original contribution to the body of knowledge in that field of study.

6 hours credit

**AHS-6110 Directed Studies**

This course will be developed with the student and professor focused on specific learning outcomes that enhance the student's program. Restriction: Student must be admitted to the Master of Applied Health Services Research program.

3 hours credit

**AHS-6120 Work Integrated Learning**

Students may undertake a four-month placement with a decision-making organization. The placement is designed to provide hands-on research and decision-making experience, and to develop an understanding of how knowledge is transferred between the academic community and decision-makers. Note: This is graded Pass/Fail

3 hours credit

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