



MOUNT ROYAL
UNIVERSITY

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CALGARY, CANADA

Department of Policy Studies

Bachelor of Arts Honours in Policy Studies Information Handbook

2010-2011

**Department of Policy Studies
Mount Royal University
4825 Mount Royal Gate, SW
Calgary, Alberta
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The Department of Policy Studies strives for accuracy with respect to the information contained in this document. Some of the contents, however, may be subject to change and/or revision.

1. ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

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2. ADMISSION TO THE HONOURS PROGRAM

In addition to completing the Honours thesis to the satisfaction of the department Honours Committee, candidates must complete the same course requirements for the standard degree of B.A. Policy Studies (POST), but at a higher overall standard of performance than is required for the major. To be eligible for consideration for the Honours program, a student must have a minimum grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.00 in the preceding 10 courses completed before applying for Honours.

A student will apply for admission into the Honours program by May 15 of the year in which they complete a minimum of 20 courses, but no later than the completion of 30 courses into the program. To apply for admission, the student will complete an 'Application to the Honours Program' form, available at the end of this Handbook.

In point form, the process for application to the Honours program is as follows:

- a) The student completes an application for admission into the Honours Policy Studies program. This includes the student acquiring a faculty supervisor.
- b) The student submits the application for admission to the Chair of the Department of Policy Studies (hereafter 'the Chair') on or before May 15 of the year in s/he completes a minimum of 20 courses.
- c) The Chair convenes a meeting of the department Honours committee. The Honours committee makes a decision as to whether the student should be accepted into the Honours program.
- d) The Chair notifies the applicant of the success or failure of her/his application. A letter from the Chair will be sent to each applicant advising him/her of the decision.
- e) The Chair sends a copy of the form to the Registrar's Office so that the Registrar can keep track of the student's progress and GPA.
- f) The Chair provides the student with a copy of the application form for the student's records.

3. IMPORTANT INFORMATION

You should consider the Honours program if:

- **you want to gain an in-depth perspective on your major;**
- **you want to continue your studies at the graduate level;**
 - **you have a grade point average of at least 3.00;**
 - **you want to do independent research.**

To achieve the Honours degree, a student must obtain at least a minimum of a B grade in each of the compulsory Policy Studies courses including the Honours thesis (POST 5120). A student who fails to maintain an overall GPA of 3.00 and a minimum grade of 'B' (3.00 on the 4.00-point grade scale) in each of the core Policy Studies degree courses will lose her/his place in the Honours program. Such a student will normally not be permitted to reapply for Honours, but may do so only with the permission of the Chair, and only after the Chair has consulted with the student's Honours supervisor.

i) **Medical certificates.** The above comments notwithstanding, the student is reminded that, in the event of major illness, Mount Royal University requires her/him to present the necessary medical certificates to the Honours Coordinator as soon as possible. Retrospective certificates will not be accepted.

ii) **Double counting of courses.** Students are reminded that substantially similar material cannot be submitted for assessment more than once in the program (i.e., in courses and/or in the thesis).

4. THE HONOURS THESIS

Essentially, the POST Honours program involves completing and defending an Honours thesis to an appropriate standard. Subsequent to acceptance into the program, by registering in *POST 5120 Honours Thesis*, the student is also contracting to meet with her/his thesis supervisor at all scheduled meetings and to complete all assignments on time as per the established timetable. In addition, the student must have completed an Honours Thesis Agreement Form. This agreement outlines the faculty and student affiliation for an Honours Thesis research project in Policy Studies. The form must be completed, signed by both the student and the supervisor and submitted to the Policy Studies Office (EA3039) by

- i) **September 15** of the academic year of the student's Honours program if the student intends to complete their Honours thesis during the ensuing winter semester.
- ii) **January 15** of the preceding academic year of the student's Honours program if the student intends to complete their Honours thesis during the ensuing fall semester.

Failure to meet these obligations will result in the termination of the project with no credit achieved.

The following are suggested timetables for the Honours thesis process if the student intends to complete their Honours Thesis during the either the fall or winter semester

Week Two: Meeting with supervisor to review the thesis proposal.

Week Four: Submission of the thesis proposal for the faculty supervisor for review.

Week Thirteen: Final draft of Honours thesis.

Exam Period: Oral defence of Honours thesis.

45 Days After End of Semester: Revisions to Honours thesis and submission of copies to the supervisor

- If the student is completing their Honours thesis during the winter semester then the last possible date of acceptance of the final revised version is June 15
- If the student is completing their Honours thesis during the fall semester then the last possible date of acceptance of the final revised version is February 15
- **Note:** If the student envisions needing time to complete all necessary corrections beyond the final day of the exam period in which they complete their oral defence of the Honours thesis, they must complete an I-grade contract and submit the I-grade contract prior to the end-of-day on the final day of the exam period.

A. Purposes and Advantages of an Honours thesis

The purposes of the thesis are:

1. To encourage the student to undertake independent policy-related research and to develop appropriate academic and experiential skills.
2. To provide the means by which the student can demonstrate her/his ability to undertake policy-related research at a professional standard and communicate the results in a professionally acceptable way.
3. To further the student's general expertise in policy.

The chief advantages of requiring a thesis in Honours are:

1. Honours graduates are an elite group. The opportunity to do sustained, independent research with academic supervision is an 'apprenticeship' which will likely be beneficial in more advanced (graduate) studies and in employment.
2. Because of the scope and quality of independent student work required, the thesis distinguishes the Honours year from the previous years.
3. The thesis provides an opportunity for the student to bring together many of the aspects of policy which have been learned in earlier years as separate subjects.
4. Because it assumes an environment where the distinctive qualities of a high-achieving student are exhibited clearly, the Honours thesis is a valuable instrument for assessment. Among the qualities assessed are originality, mastery of policy ideas, the appropriate structure of presentation, the requisite academic and applied knowledge, and how to use them.
5. The thesis develops and tests the ability to organize and execute a sustained piece of research and to present complex material effectively and well.

B. Thesis Workshop

A thesis workshop will be scheduled for mid-October. All final-year Honours students must attend. The objective of the workshop is to assist students with the selection of a topic and thesis design, as well as to provide students with the information on how to write the 4-6 page thesis proposal (see below). This proposal is due by the end of December of the Honours student's final academic year if they intend to complete the Honours thesis in the winter semester. If the student intends to complete the Honours thesis in the fall semester, then they are required to complete the proposal by August 22nd (or the first Monday following August 22nd).

C. Thesis Proposal

The student will submit to her/his thesis supervisor a 4-6 page proposal of their thesis. The supervisor will then write an evaluative response within 14 days of receiving the proposal. The supervisor will then arrange a time to discuss her/his response with the student.

The purpose of the thesis proposal is to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the supervisor that the research project is well underway. More specifically, the research proposal will show that the

student has progressed to the stage where s/he can declare with appropriate certainty that the proposed project is a) feasible, b) will outline the methodology to be used, and c) will identify the appropriate data sources.

The student's thesis proposal must include the following:

1. **Title.** The title encapsulates what the research project is to be about. Ideally, it should be brief.
2. **Introduction: Research Question/Hypothesis.** Think of this as a series of questions, for e.g.: What is the general topic? What is the specific research question? The hypothesis to be proven or disproven? The topic will be defined through an appropriate statement of the question to be answered, or of the hypothesis to be tested.
3. **Motivation: Issue of Interest.** Why is the proposed topic interesting to policy analysts? To you? What is the topic's policy importance?
4. **Literature Review.** The literature review component is a summary and synthesis of the main findings of previous work on your research topic. The objective in writing the literature review is to convey to the reader the knowledge and ideas the student has established in the thesis topic. Better literature reviews thread the different papers around a main argument. By contrast, a poor literature review is merely a descriptive list summarizing one paper after another.
5. **Underlying Theory.** What theoretical model(s) will form the underpinnings of your analysis? Which precise prediction from the underlying model(s) will be tested? What would the anticipated predictions be?
6. **Data Sources.** Details of data are required to address the issue of interest. Which data will be used? How will the data be obtained? Are the data from an existing database or assembled from different sources?
7. **Empirical Strategy.** Specify the empirical strategy employed to test your research question/hypothesis. This must be specific.
8. **Bibliography.** The proposal must conclude with a bibliography of all the material examined. The bibliography will include primary and secondary sources. (Appendices, which appear prior to the bibliography, are also included if needed.)

D. Content of the Honours Thesis

The principal requirement of the Honours degree is the writing of a 40- to 60-page paper (not counting notes, bibliography and if needed, appendices), showcasing the qualitative and/or quantitative skills the student has acquired as an undergraduate at Mount Royal generally, and in the BA-POST program specifically. The thesis will be of sufficient quality and interest to present to an employer or a graduate school. The thesis should reflect some independent research in the policy field that is genuinely the student's own work.

The Honours thesis in Policy Studies will normally consist of three main sections. The first section contains the topic description, including a topic statement, explanation of the research problem, and review of the prior literature. The second section is an explanation of the research

question/hypothesis, including design, procedures of data collection, and the method of data analysis. The third section contains the actual results of the data analysis and a discussion of the results. The Honours thesis will typically feature the following three sections/components:

i. Topic

Identify and describe the topic you wish to study and establish its place in the field of knowledge that already exists. This should be done by inclusion of the following subsections into your paper.

• ***Topic Statement***

The topic statement should identify the area of study. A one-page statement is probably sufficient for this.

• ***Explanation of the Research Question/Hypothesis, Design, etc.***

The explanation and description of the research question/hypothesis (or problem) goes considerably beyond the topic statement. At this point the specific focus of the thesis will have been clarified. It is important that the research question/hypothesis has focus, draws upon theory and is feasible to carry out given the time limit.

The explanation of the research question/hypothesis will necessarily include a first attempt at several important tasks, including a first attempt to identify and discuss relevant literature and a first attempt at describing the problem, including identifying important concepts, issues, and perspectives. It should include a clear statement of the research question or the hypotheses to be tested in the study.

• ***Review of Prior Literature***

The literature review should not be an exhaustive review of everything in the area, but should focus, first, on the broad literature which sets the tone, and then on the specific literature which addresses the issue (or perhaps literature addressing a similar issue in a way which can be adopted to this problem). This phase of the project provides an opportunity for the student to examine the theoretical considerations which are relevant to the research. Reviewing the literature will enable the student to formulate more relevant hypotheses.

ii. Research question/hypothesis, design, data collection procedures, and method of analysis

This section should explain how the student plans to study and resolve the research question/hypothesis. It should also explain what types of data are to be used in the study. This can be done by inclusion of the following sections or topics in your paper.

• ***Research Design***

Delineate the project's design and approach. In order to produce a meaningful, concise, and well-organized research project, a student must clearly define the paper's structural boundaries by explaining what will and will not be included. This section should describe the design of the study.

• ***Data Collection Procedures***

This section should discuss the data collection procedures that will be used (there may be more

than one) and should provide some justification of the choice of those procedures over any alternatives. Data collection procedures should be described in sufficient detail so someone else could evaluate if they are adequate. State under what conditions the information will be collected and analyzed.

- ***Method of Data Analysis***

Throughout the thesis, the student needs to keep in mind how s/he will ultimately analyze the data. The choice of analysis method may draw heavily on past research.

iii. Results of the data analysis and discussion of the results

This section should include the evidence that has been gathered to prove or disprove the original research question/hypothesis (or hypotheses). This section of the paper should include the following:

- ***Results of the Data Analysis***

This section should report the findings of the study. It typically includes any tables that are presented as evidence, interviews, and so on. It is the main body of the work and includes all the evidence which the student has discovered which helps to resolve, or in some cases further complicates, the problem s/he has selected. The student will produce a satisfactory analysis of the data.

- ***Discussion of Results and Concluding Remarks***

By the end of the paper, the student should be in a position to either confirm or deny the research paper's hypothesis. The confirmation or denial of the hypothesis (or hypotheses) is in no way related to the quality of the research. This section should discuss the findings and place them in the broader context. At this point it will be necessary to discuss the implications of the findings, how they relate to prior literature, and so on. It is important to conclude your thesis analysis appropriately.



E. Summative Time-Line Overview

i) Completion of Honours Thesis During the Winter Semester

Fall Term	
Week 1	Contact potential supervisor to finalize a working agreement with a general thesis topic
Week 5	Finalize thesis topic
Week 6	<i>Thesis Proposal workshop*</i>
Week 7	Create a plan to complete your proposal
Exam Period	<i>Submit proposal to thesis supervisor*</i>
Winter Term	
Week 2	<i>Meeting with supervisor to review thesis proposal*</i>
Week 6	Complete writing first segment: Introduction and Literature Review
Week 9	Complete writing second segment: Methods and Results
Week 12	Complete writing final segment: Discussion and Conclusion
Week 13	<i>Submit final draft of the thesis to supervisor*</i>
Exam Period	<i>Oral Defence of thesis*</i>
June 15	<i>Complete revisions must be completed*</i>

* Items in bold italics are required deadlines/dates. This timeline assumes that the winter term (January-April) is the student's final semester at Mount Royal.

ii) Completion of Honours Thesis During the Fall Semester

Fall Term	
Week 6	<i>Thesis Proposal workshop**</i>
Winter Term	
Week 7	Contact potential supervisor to finalize a working agreement with a general thesis topic
Week 14	Finalize thesis topic
Exam Period	Create a plan to complete your proposal
Summer	
22th of August¹	<i>Submit proposal to thesis supervisor**</i>
Fall Term	
Week 2	<i>Meeting with supervisor to review thesis proposal**</i>
Week 6	Complete writing first segment: Introduction and Literature Review
Week 9	Complete writing second segment: Methods and Results
Week 12	Complete writing final segment: Discussion and Conclusion
Week 13	<i>Submit final draft of the thesis to supervisor**</i>
Exam Period	<i>Oral Defence of thesis**</i>
February 15	<i>Complete revisions must be completed**</i>

** Items in bold italics are required deadlines/dates. This timeline assumes that the fall term (September-December) is the student's final semester at Mount Royal.

¹ If August 22nd is not a Monday, then the first Monday following August 22nd.

F. Ethical Clearance

It is a requirement of Mount Royal University that the 'ethical conduct' of research activities be assessed by Mount Royal's Human Research Ethics Board. This policy applies to any Honours research project involving human subjects. Working with her/his thesis supervisor, the student is expected to seek ethical approval for any interview, survey or other research involving people. The application form can be downloaded from <http://research.mtroyal.ca/ethics.php>. It is not necessary to produce an application for Ethical Clearance with your initial Honours application. However, this must be done prior to commencing your research.

G. Assessment Policy

The student's grade for the Honours thesis is based on the final written draft and the student's oral presentation (defence) of her/his thesis work. The oral presentation/defence will be evaluated by the supervisor and the Chair. The final draft of the thesis will be graded by the supervisor and a second reader.

Students will submit their completed thesis research project - on a flash-drive or equivalent electronic media - to the Department of Policy Studies Office. The thesis will then be printed, photocopied, stapled and sent to the supervisor and to the second reader. The final mark awarded for the thesis will be an average of the marks given by the two markers, unless there is a discrepancy of more than 10 percent. In cases where there is a discrepancy of more than 10 percent, a negotiated settlement will take place between the two original markers, the Honours Coordinator and the Chair. A third marker may then be appointed.

The Honours thesis oral presentation/defence consists of the student giving an approximately 20 minute presentation of her/his work. This will be followed by questions and comments about the thesis by the supervisor and the Chair. No other faculty members or general public will be in attendance. After commenting on the paper, the supervisor and the Chair may, if they wish, provide suggestions to the student about methods for improving the paper. The suggestions will be put in writing.

Following the honours thesis defence, the student will be asked to vacate the room for a short period of time. During this time, the Chair and supervisor will formulate their recommendations and determine as to whether the thesis deserves to be granted departmental Honours. The final approval of a departmental Honours thesis may require the student to make revisions according to the supervisor's specifications.

i. Criteria examiners will take into consideration in arriving at a final thesis grade: student learning outcomes and evaluation rubric.

A1. Ability to put policy analysis in context
Criterion 1: Policy problem and background statement reflect awareness of relevant context(s) (historical, social, institutional, cross-national, etc.) necessary for understanding the problem.
Criterion 2: Problem is suitable to techniques and application of policy analysis.
Criterion 3: Analysis and recommendations take into account multiple perspectives as relevant (including differences by race, gender, class, etc., where appropriate).
Criterion 4: Assessment of alternatives includes attention to constraints of context (including organizational capacity and limitations in human decision-making).
A2. Familiarity with the policy-making process
Criterion 1: Relevant institutions (and relationships among them) are taken into account as these are relevant to the policy problem, analysis of alternatives, and recommendations. Is the information about relevant institutions accurate?
Criterion 2: Recommendations are appropriate to the decision-making context (level of government, type of actor) for which the thesis is written.
A3. Ability to engage in ethical reasoning
Criterion 1: Ethical concerns are correctly identified and relevant ethical criteria are included in the assessment of alternatives.
Criterion 2: Ethical reasoning is clear, logical and complete (taking account of multiple perspectives), and empirical claims are substantiated; normative arguments and perspectives are identified as such.
A4. Understanding legal institutions and reasoning
Criterion 1: Treatment of any relevant legal issues reflects an understanding of Canadian legal institutions and legal analysis; legality is included (as appropriate) among criteria for assessing alternatives.
B1. Knowledge of basic quantitative methods
Criterion 1: Problem framing, policy analysis and recommendations reflect an appreciation for policy factors; relevant theory/concepts are employed appropriately; terminology is employed correctly.
Criterion 2: Quantitative data are provided where relevant, and analyzed correctly with basic statistical techniques.
Criterion 3: Relevant criteria are included in assessment of alternatives.
B2. Ability to apply analytic techniques in different areas and investigate in depth.
Criterion 1: The problem/question is clearly specified and its importance is explained and substantiated with evidence (including quantitative data where relevant).
Criterion 2: The research design and data-gathering are suitable for addressing this problem.
Criterion 3: Appropriate and <u>specific</u> criteria for assessing alternatives are identified and applied.
Criterion 4: The most reliable and relevant data available were used, and all evidence is weighted according to its quality.
Criterion 5: Relevant findings from other studies help inform the analysis. A demonstrated proficiency in selecting and locating relevant primary source materials is expected.
Criterion 6: Recommendations are based on reliable data and conscientious application of relevant criteria; consideration is given to implementation concerns relating to recommendations.
Criterion 7: Limitations of data and/or analysis are recognized and addressed where needed.
C1. Communication skills
Criterion 1: Writing is clear, grammatically and syntactically correct, and concise.
Criterion 2: Paper is organized clearly and appropriately; sections flow logically.
Criterion 3: Complex and policy-specific facts and ideas are intelligible for a lay reader.
Criterion 4: Paper is referenced appropriately, using proper citation format. ¹

¹ Students are reminded that all University policies concerning academic integrity will be upheld scrupulously. Students are further reminded to familiarize themselves with Mount Royal's 'Code of Student Conduct'. See also: <http://www.mtroyal.ca/CampusServices/CampusResources/StudentConduct/index.htm>

- ii. **Degrees of Quality by letter grade:** The following are brief descriptions and corresponding grades of outstanding, very good, acceptable, and unacceptable theses. (N.B.: this is meant as a brief guide only.)

Outstanding (A+) An outstanding thesis has the following features:

- very well written and very well organized;
- exhibits mature, independent thinking;
- displays understanding of the literature;
- exhibits command over the material;
- is researched thoroughly;
- addresses an important question or problem;
- clearly states the problem and explains why it is important;
- excellent research design;
- well-planned and well-designed questionnaire (if used);
- shows deep understanding of the theory;
- data from multiple sources; and
- comprehensive, complete, sophisticated, and convincing analysis.

Very Good (A) A very good thesis has the following features:

- displays the student's understanding of the field and the analysis undertaken;
- addresses a meaningful question or problem;
- executed competently;
- uses appropriate, standard theory, methods, and techniques;
- includes well-executed research;
- very good research design;
- demonstrates technical competence;
- presents solid, expected results/answers; and
- well written and well organized.

Acceptable (B) An acceptable thesis has the following features:

- typically focuses on a question or problem that has predictable results;
- demonstrates technical competence;
- shows student's ability to do research and use standard methods;
- competently applies theory to a problem;
- acceptable research design;
- narrow understanding of the field;
- uncritical review of the literature; and
- analysis is unsophisticated or limited.

Unacceptable (B- and below) An unacceptable thesis has the following features:

- no clearly defined question or problem or the question or problem is trivial, weak, or unoriginal;
- not using proper methods or methods are used inappropriately;
- poorly organized and poorly written with many spelling and grammatical mistakes;
- literature review is weak or missing;
- appropriate theoretical analysis is missing, wrong, or not handled well;

- hypothesis is inconsistent, does not flow from theory, or is missing entirely;
- data are flawed, misrepresented, or wrong;
- research design is poor;
- results presented are obvious, already known, unexplained, or misinterpreted;
- analysis is wrong, inappropriate, or confused; and
- conclusions drawn are invalid or oversold.

5. FURTHER ADVICE TO THE STUDENT: SUPERVISION OF THE THESIS

The thesis is the most distinctive part of the Honours program. To make this apprenticeship in research more valuable and less stressful, the following guidelines have been developed to assist students in obtaining appropriate and consistent levels of supervision:

- The supervisor should assist the student to define a topic. The student is responsible for proposing the area and general idea behind the thesis. The supervisor can provide particular help in advising when a topic is of a manageable size, whether it contains an appropriate quantity, and in determining the appropriate level of policy analysis.
- The supervisor should also: i) suggest ways to make effective use of research time; ii) discuss the standard required of an Honours thesis; iii) make arrangements for regular contact with their student; and iv) provide a constructive and critical assessment of any work submitted.
- It is appropriate that the supervisor indicate to the student areas of the literature which are relevant, as well as potentially useful techniques and specific references to items of knowledge which may have escaped the student's attention. This is not considered to be an excessive amount of help.
- Although more frequent meeting may be arranged if desired, students are expected to see their supervisor every other week. **It is the responsibility of the student to arrange (and keep) these meetings.**
- Supervisors are requested to read and respond promptly to any sensible material handed to them. It is very helpful if students start to put ideas in writing as soon as possible.
- The supervisor will point out sloppy or incorrect grammar or expression. However, it is not the supervisor's responsibility to rewrite material for students.
- **Always to back up your thesis material.** Students are strongly advised to make hard copies, as well as copies onto a flash drive or similar electronic media. Faulty or corrupt software, flash drives, and even hard disks have often been sources of great angst, especially where there is a loss of material.



Department of Policy Studies

POST 5120: HONOURS THESIS (3 CREDITS)

SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE

A. Course Description

Upon acceptance into the course, the Honours degree option of the Bachelor of Arts in Policy Studies program requires students to complete a thesis with the supervision of a faculty supervisor. The principal requirement of the Honours degree is to write a 40- to 60-page paper (not counting notes, bibliography and appendices) that showcases the qualitative and/or quantitative skills that a student has acquired as an undergraduate at Mount Royal University and is of sufficient quality and interest to present to an employer or a graduate school. The thesis should reflect some independent research in the policy field that is genuinely the student's own work. In undertaking the Honours thesis, the student's goal is to teach the reader something, to show that her/his analysis answered a research question that was laid out at the beginning of the thesis. The supervisor will help the student refine the research question, to find and analyze data, and to help ensure that the student's research efforts are both disciplined and efficient. This assumes, of course, that the student will conduct her/his own research and write her/his own thesis.

B. Prerequisites/Co-requisite

The Honours Thesis will be completed concurrently with the courses normally taken in the final semester of the student's BA Major in Policy Studies degree program. To be eligible, a student must have a minimum grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.00 in the preceding 10 courses completed before applying for the Honours program and retain a 3.00 GPA while enrolled in the Honours program.

In addition, the student must have completed an Honours Thesis Agreement Form. This agreement outlines the faculty and student affiliation for an Honours Thesis research project in Policy Studies. The form must be completed, signed by both the student and the supervisor and submitted to the Policy Studies Office (EA3039) by September 15 of the academic year of the student's Honours program.

Co-requisite: Policy Studies 5020 Integrative Professional Practice

C. Requirements

The student is required to meet with her/his supervisor on a regular basis to discuss the progress of the thesis. The student will present final results of the thesis in written and oral form. Attendance at oral presentations will be restricted to the student, her/his supervisor, and the Department of Policy Studies Chair.

D. Suggested Reading

Lipson, C., 2005, *How to write a B.A. Thesis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bardach, E., 2005, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*, 2nd edition. New York: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Haas, P.J. and J.F. Springer, 1998, *Applied Policy Research: Concepts and Cases*. New York: Garland Press.

E. Learning Outcomes:

University Learning Outcomes

An education at Mount Royal University ensures that upon graduation with a diploma or degree, students will gain competencies in the following six areas:

Communication	Computer Literacy	Thinking Skills	Ethical Reasoning	Information Retrieval and Evaluation	Group Effectiveness
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It is intended and expected that each course a student successfully completes at Mount Royal will develop at least one of these competencies. It is not intended that all competencies should be included in each course. Building upon this principle, each program, by combining an integrated sequence of courses, will ensure that upon graduation, a student will have acquired the desired level of competency in all the specified areas.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to facilitate and measure the following *selected* outcomes:

1. Communications Outcomes

The oral presentation and written text of the thesis requires that a variety of texts and media are comprehended, interpreted, and evaluated. In addition, understanding and using vocabulary, symbols, charts and numerical expressions are necessary. Furthermore, articulation of policy is an integral part of the thesis.

2. Thinking Skills Outcomes

The student's arguments in her/his thesis require critical analysis. The student must explain her/his position clearly and concisely and arrive at the optimal decision with respect to policy. The thesis requires using social science scholarship in policy analysis. As a result, it necessitates the testing of hypotheses, separating the principles of an argument, validating premises, and distinguishing viable theories. A critical component of the Honours thesis in Policy Studies is solving problems in policy by applying sound and professional judgement. Finally, while writing the thesis, the student must respect differences in opinions, views, and perspectives of the various actors in the policy process.

3. Information Retrieval and Evaluation Outcomes

The literature review section of the thesis requires identifying relevant (discerning what is useful and what is not-so-useful) prior research, as well as synthesizing and evaluating this material. Conducting research requires searching for pertinent information that may be available in textbooks, journals, magazines, videos, newspaper, and on computers/internet. Finally, writing a thesis requires the complete organization of your arguments and results.

4. Ethical Reasoning Outcomes

An Honours thesis in Policy Studies requires that ethical concerns are correctly identified and relevant ethical criteria are included in the assessment of alternatives. In addition, it is essential that ethical reasoning is clear, logical and complete (taking account of multiple perspectives), and empirical claims are substantiated; normative arguments are represented as such.

While computer literacy is a learning outcome of completing an Honours thesis in Policy Studies, it is not a central component.

F. Grades

The student's grade for the Honours thesis is based on the oral presentation and the final written draft of the thesis. The presentation will be evaluated by the supervisor and the Chair of the Department of Policy Studies. The final draft of the thesis will be graded by the supervisor and a second reader. The thesis will be graded based on the following criteria:

- the originality of the topic (How new and interesting is the topic of the project?);
- the technical execution of the analysis (How well is the analysis done? Are the results correct and plausible?);
- the clearness of the written exposition (How well is the final project written? That is, how suitably the student has managed the structure of presentation and the structure of ideas in her/his thesis.).

The student's final percentage grade will be converted into a letter grade using the following conversions.

Percentage - letter grade correlation		
95 - 100 = A+	73 - 77 = B	60 - 63 = C-
85 - 94 = A	70 - 72 = B-	58 - 60 D+
80 - 84 = A-	68 - 69 = C+	50 - 57 D
78 - 79 = B+	63 - 67 = C	00 - 49 F

G. Preparation

Upon completion of her/his third full year in the program (or 90 credits), and no later than the start of her/his fourth year, a student must submit an Honours Thesis Proposal to the Honours Supervisor and the Department Chair for assessment and approval. By the third week of the first [?] semester of student's fourth year in the program, she/he must submit a Thesis Advising Agreement form to the Department Chair. This form will serve as a contract between the student, the supervisor, and the department. The supervisor's role in the Honours thesis is to guide the student through the process of designing the research project, conducting the research, and writing the thesis. The student and supervisor will meet regularly to monitor and assess progress. It is recommended that a formal supervisor-student meeting schedule be drawn up at the start of the Honours semester.

For the student, among the most important decisions is the topic for the thesis. From the student, the department expects questions in search of answers, not data and/or methods of analysis in search of questions. Each student should plan on completing all necessary data collection for the thesis by the end of the Reading Break of the winter semester.

During the research and writing phase of the thesis, the student should think of herself/himself as preparing policy options for any person in an authoritative policy position..

H. Format of the Thesis:

The format of the thesis consists of the following sections:

1. Title page including student's name
2. Abstract: one page summary of the work
3. Table of contents
4. Introduction
5. Literature Review
6. Data
7. Methods and Hypotheses
8. Empirical Results
9. Policy Implications and Conclusions
10. References
11. Appendix

I. Thesis Policies:

- Honours students will be provided with a Department of Policy Studies' Honours Thesis Guide.
- Format of Assigned Work: The thesis must be typed, with acceptable formats for citation, bibliography and appendices (see Honours Thesis Guide). In keeping with prescribed learning outcomes, the oral presentation must use PowerPoint or a similar software.
- Policy on Lateness: Due dates are binding. Late theses are not accepted without either prior arrangement or a compelling, verifiable reason.



**Application for Admission to the Honours Stream
Bachelor of Arts, Mount Royal University**

Basic Entrance Requirements

In order to be considered for Honours,

- Students must have completed 20 courses toward their Bachelor of Arts credential by **May 15** of the year of application. Students taking spring courses may be admitted conditionally into Honours, with the provision that they complete their spring course(s) and maintain a grade point average of at least 3.00.
- Students must present a minimum grade point average of 3.00 in the last ten courses completed.
- Students must submit an unofficial transcript of their academic record at the same time as their application for Honours.
- Students must fulfill any additional requirements specified by the Honours discipline (Contact an Advisor in the Honours discipline for specific information).
- Students must have previously declared a major in the Honours discipline.

NOTE: Admission into the Honours stream is competitive and is not guaranteed.

First day applications for Honours program are accepted by departments—March 15

Deadline for applications—May 15

Decisions made by departments—June 1

No Applications for Honours will be accepted before MARCH 15 or after MAY 15

Last name _____ First name and initial _____

Student number _____ MyMRU email address _____

Mailing address as of June 1 _____

Applying to enter the Honours Program in

- Anthropology English History
 Policy Studies Psychology Sociology

Please submit this form to your honours department office. Be sure to include an unofficial transcript with your application.

Student's signature _____ Date _____

To be completed by the department:

Approved Conditional Admission (see below) Waitlist Not Approved

Comments (if any) _____

Chair's signature _____ Date _____

Copy 1 – Dean's Office

Copy 2 - Department Office

Copy 3 – Student

(Revised March 1, 2011)

**DEPARTMENT OF POLICY STUDIES
MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY
POST 5120 Honours Thesis • Agreement Form**

This agreement outlines the faculty and student affiliation for an Honours Thesis research project in Policy Studies. This form must be completed, signed by both the student and the supervisor, and submitted to the Department of Policy Studies General Office (EA3039) by September 15 of the academic year of the student's Honours program.

Student Information:

Name: _____ ID # _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Thesis Information:

Supervisor's Name: _____ Thesis Term: _____

Brief description of project:

Minimum agreed frequency of consultation between advisor and student (it is the student's responsibility to meet with the advisor to ensure satisfactory progress is made):

Student's signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor's signature: _____ Date: _____

Important Both the student and the supervisor should be aware of the various dates/deadlines for the thesis workshop, proposal submission, final draft, oral defence, and final submission that will dictate the date of the student's graduation. These dates are contained in the Honours Policy Studies Information Handbook.