



Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies

Bachelor of Arts Honours in Policy Studies

Information Handbook

2025-2026

Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies
Mount Royal University
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The Department of Economics, Justice, and 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.

Key Deadlines

Between March 1 to May 1: Application period
Last day of fall semester period: Submit proposal to supervisor/co-supervisor
Last day of winter classes: Submit thesis to supervisor and second reader
Winter exam period: Oral defence of thesis
Seven days after last day of winter final exam period: Submit final, revised thesis (if applicable) to supervisor and second reader

1. ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

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2. ADMISSION TO THE HONOURS PROGRAM

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 each of the preceding 10 courses completed before applying for Honours. A student will apply for admission into the Honours program between March 1 and May 1 of the year in which they complete a minimum of 20 courses into the program. To apply for admission, the student and supervisor will complete the agreement form found at the end of this handbook, and the student will submit this form to Dr. Kari Roberts, Chair of the Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies (kroberts@mtroyal.ca).

Below is an outline of the process for application to the Honours program:

- The student completes an application for admission into the Honours Policy Studies program, as well as an Honours Thesis Agreement Form. Completion

of the latter form (which is provided at the end of this Handbook) requires that the student obtain the consent of a full-time faculty member of the Policy Studies program to (co)supervise the thesis.

- The student submits both documents identified in the point above to the Chair of the Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies (hereafter “Chair”), between March 1 to May 1 of the year in which s/he completes a minimum of 20 courses.
- The Honours Coordinator 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. The decision of the Honours Committee is conveyed to the Chair.
- 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 her/him of the decision.
- The Chair sends a copy of the application form to the Dean of Arts, as well as to the student for their 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 GPA on your last 10 courses of at least 3.00; and,
you want to do independent research.**

To be eligible to pursue an Honours degree in Policy Studies, a student must obtain a minimum grade of B (3.00 on the 4.00-point grade scale) in each of the 20 compulsory (core) Policy Studies degree courses, as well as the Honours thesis (POST 5120). A prospective honours student must retake any core Policy Studies degree courses in which s/he obtained grades lower than a B prior to being accepted into the Honours program. A student applying for honours cannot repeat a required course more than twice to secure this minimum B grade. A student who fails to maintain an overall GPA of 3.00 and a minimum grade of B in each of the core Policy Studies degree courses will lose her/his place in the Honours program. In the event a student is removed from the honours program, s/he 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 supervisor/co-supervisors.

Medical certificates

In the event of a medical issue that could interfere with a student’s honours work or eligibility for the honours program, documentation will be required and should be forwarded to the Honours Coordinator as soon as possible. Retroactive certificates may

not be considered.

Academic Accommodation

It is a student's responsibility to request and register for academic accommodation through *Access and Inclusion Services*.

Website:

<https://www.mtroyal.ca/AcademicSupport/ResourcesServices/AccessibilityServices/ContactUs/index.htm>

Office: Y201

Phone: 403-440-6868

E-mail: accessibility@mtroyal.ca

Expectation of Original Work

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). The use of Artificial Intelligence tools as research or writing tools is not permitted.

4. THE HONOURS THESIS

Essentially, the POST Honours program involves completing and defending a 40–60-page Honours thesis to an appropriate scholarly 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/co-supervisors at all scheduled meetings and to complete all assignments on time, as per the established timetable. In addition, the student must complete an Honours Thesis Agreement Form, available at the end of this Handbook. 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/co-supervisors, and submitted to the EJPS Department Chair, along with the student's application to the Honours Program.

A. Purposes and Advantages of an Honours Thesis

Purposes of the thesis include, but are not limited to:

- Experience with conducting independent, policy-related research and the development of appropriate academic and experiential skills.
- Experience with disseminating scholarly results appropriate for the undergraduate level.
- Enhancing general policy expertise.

The advantages of a thesis in Honours are:

- Honours graduates are an elite group. The opportunity to do sustained, independent research with academic supervision is an “apprenticeship” of sorts,

which will likely be beneficial in more advanced (graduate) studies.

- 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.
- The thesis showcases the distinctive capabilities of the high-achieving student, and enables the assessment of these qualities. Among the qualities assessed are originality, mastery of policy ideas and the relevant literature, methodological rigor, and the written and verbal communication of ideas.
- The thesis fosters a student's ability to organize and execute a sustained piece of research and to present complex material.
- The thesis provides an opportunity for the student to develop experience using research methods (e.g., statistical analysis, focus groups, interviews) - the same tools that are used by policy analysts working in government, NGOs, think tanks, and government relations firms.

B. Thesis Workshop

A thesis workshop will be scheduled for October/November, which must be attended by all final-year Honours students. The objective of the workshop is to assist students with the fine-tuning of a topic and thesis design, as well as designing the 4–6-page thesis proposal (see below). This proposal is due by the end of the fall-term exam period of the Honours student's final academic year.

C. Thesis Proposal and Honours Thesis

By the end of the fall-term exam period of the Honours student's final year, the student will submit to her/his thesis supervisor/co-supervisors a 4–6-page thesis proposal. The supervisor/co-supervisors will then provide an evaluative assessment by the end of the second week of January, after which the supervisor/co-supervisors will arrange a time to discuss the assessment with the student.

The purpose of the thesis proposal is to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the supervisor/co-supervisors that the research project is well underway. Specifically, the research proposal will demonstrate that the student has progressed to the stage where s/he can establish that the proposed project is a) feasible; b) will outline the methodology to be used; and c) will identify the appropriate qualitative or quantitative data sources.

The student's thesis proposal should include the following:

- **Title:** The title briefly encapsulates what the research project is to be about.
- **Introduction and Motivation:** Research Question/Hypothesis: Think of this as a series of questions, for example: What is the general topic? What is the specific research question? Is there a hypothesis to be proven or disproven? Why is the proposed topic interesting to you? What is the topic's policy importance? The topic will be defined through an appropriate statement of the question to be answered, or of the hypothesis to be tested.

- **Literature Review and Underlying Theoretical Model(s):** The literature review 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. Be sure to avoid simply describing existing research on your topic. The literature review should also thoroughly explain the underlying theory. Are there any underlying theoretical models (or models) that will underpin your analysis? Are there any predictions from the underlying model(s) to be tested? Note that an underlying theoretical model may be taken from Policy Studies, Economics or Political Science literatures, but the thesis must still consider the policy relevance of the issue being addressed.
- **Methodology:** Is there a specific strategy employed to test the research question? Furthermore, if any quantitative or qualitative data are being used in the thesis, provide details of these data that are required to address the issue of interest. How will the data be obtained? Are the data from an existing database or are they assembled from different sources? What can the data explain and what are its limitations?
- **Bibliography:** The proposal must conclude with a bibliography of all the material examined, including both primary and secondary sources. Appendices, which appear prior to the bibliography, are also included if needed.

The Honours thesis should include the same components as the thesis proposal, though its structure and composition may vary.

D. 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/co-supervisors, the student is expected to seek ethical approval for any interview, survey or other research involving people. The application form is available at <http://research.mtroyal.ca/for-researchers/research-ethics/>. It is not necessary to produce an application for ethical clearance with your initial Honours application. However, ethics approval (if applicable) must be obtained prior to commencing your research.

E. Assessment Policy

The grade assigned for the Honours thesis is based upon the quality of the written thesis; the purposes of the oral defence/presentation are to verify the originality of the thesis’ content; to determine whether the student thoroughly understands, and can defend, the analysis in the written thesis; and to provide the student with an opportunity to provide clarification of the thesis’ content and to discuss it intellectually with the evaluators. The written draft(s) of the thesis will be assessed by the supervisor/co-supervisors and an additional reader. The Chair of the Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies (or designate) will moderate the oral defence, and as such will neither ask questions, make comments, nor grade the thesis.

Please note that failure to submit the completed thesis by the deadline (final day of Winter Semester classes) will render the thesis ineligible for grading, and this will result in an automatic failing grade for the thesis.

The final grade awarded for the thesis will be an average of the grades given by the graders, 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 original graders and the Chair. An additional grader may then be appointed.

The oral defence of the thesis consists of a brief student presentation of no longer than 20 minutes, followed by questions and comments by the supervisor/co-supervisors and the additional reader. No other faculty members, students, or members of the general public will be in attendance at the oral defence.

Following the oral defence, the student will be asked to vacate the room for a short period of time during which the supervisor/co-supervisors and additional reader will formulate their recommendations and determine whether the thesis deserves to be granted departmental Honours (i.e., the supervisor/co-supervisors and additional reader have awarded the thesis, in its current form a grade of B or higher). If the thesis is worthy of departmental Honours in its current form, then the supervisor/co-supervisors and additional reader may offer written suggestions for revisions that may raise the final grade of the thesis. However, if the thesis is unworthy of departmental Honours in its current form, then no revisions will be permitted; the final thesis grade will be the grade determined at the defence.

If revisions are suggested, then the revised thesis must be submitted to the supervisor/co-supervisors and additional reader(s) seven days after the last day of the winter-term exam period. Failure to submit the revised thesis by this date and time will result in the thesis being awarded the initial grade determined at the defence.

i) Criteria examiners will take into consideration in arriving at a final thesis grade: Assessment criteria, 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.

B1. Knowledge of basic quantitative and/or qualitative 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 or qualitative evidence 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 specific 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 strictly. Students are further reminded to familiarize themselves with MRU's "Code of Student Conduct". Also see <http://www.mtroyal.ca/CampusServices/CampusResources/StudentConduct/>

ii) **Grading System:**

Percentage	Alpha Grade	4.0 Point Scale	Description
95-100	A+	4.0	Excellent - Superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.
85-94	A	4.0	
80-84	A-	3.7	
77-79	B+	3.3	Good - Clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.
73-76	B	3.0	
70-72	B-	2.7	
67-69	C+	2.3	Satisfactory - Basic understanding of subject matter.
63-66	C	2.0	
60-62	C-	1.7	
55-59	D+	1.3	Marginal performance - Generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses.
50-54	D	1.0	
0-49	F	0.0	Fail - Assigned to students a) who do not meet the academic requirements of the course, or b) who cease to continue in the course, but do not withdraw as per MRU policy.

An excellent thesis is expected to have the following features:

- Superior performance;
- Showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter;
- Evidence of thorough and balanced research;
- Depth of comprehension and analysis; capacity to interpret and apply material (demonstrates independent, critical thinking);
- No significant errors, omissions or irrelevancies;
- Clear introduction, logical, clearly organized analysis, and conclusions supported by evidence, drawing together the key points of the analysis;
- Excellent grammar, style and spelling.

A good thesis is expected to have the following features:

- Good research and balance evidence of above average comprehension and analysis;
- Competent grasp of material and ability to explain it in context, with some independent insights.
- Few significant errors, omissions or irrelevancies.
- Generally well organized, with a good introduction, analysis and conclusion

supported with evidence.

- Good grammar, style and spelling.

5. 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 student is responsible for proposing the area and general idea behind the thesis to the Honours coordinator. After discussing with the advisor and discipline coordinators, the Honours coordinator will recommend a supervisor/co-supervisors with suitable, relevant expertise in this area. If no faculty member in the POST department has the requisite expertise in the proposed research area, the student may be advised to change the research area.
- The supervisor/co-supervisors should assist the student to finalize the topic. The supervisor/co-supervisors may also provide help in advising on the topic's manageability, and the appropriate level of policy analysis.
- The supervisor/co-supervisors should also: a) suggest ways to make effective use of research time; b) discuss the standards required of an Honours thesis; c) make arrangements for regular contact with the student; and d) provide a constructive and critical assessment of any work submitted.
- If applicable, the supervisor/co-supervisors may indicate to the student areas of the literature that are relevant, as well as potentially useful techniques and specific references to items of knowledge which may have escaped the student's attention.
- Although more frequent meetings may be arranged if desired, students are expected to see their supervisor/co-supervisors regularly. **It is the student's responsibility to arrange (and keep) these meetings.**
- The supervisor/co-supervisors should read and respond promptly to any material handed to them. It is very helpful if students start to put ideas in writing as soon as possible.
- The supervisor/co-supervisors will point out sloppy or incorrect grammar or expression. However, it is not their responsibility to rewrite material for students.
- **Always back up your thesis material.** Students are strongly advised to make hard copies, as well as soft copies on 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 Economics, Justice, and 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/co-supervisors. The principal requirement of the Honours degree is to write a 40-60 page paper (not counting notes, bibliography and appendices) that showcases the qualitative and/or quantitative skills that a student has acquired as an undergraduate student at Mount Royal University, and is of acceptable quality. 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 show that her/his analysis answered a research question that was laid out at the beginning of the thesis. The supervisor/co-supervisors will help the student to 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 to retain a 3.00 GPA while enrolled in the Honours program. The student must also earn a minimum grade of B on all core Policy Studies degree courses after being admitted to 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/co-supervisors and submitted to the EJPS Department Chair via email, along with their application to the Honours program.

Co-requisite: Policy Studies 5020 Integrative Professional Practice.

C. Requirements

The student is required to meet with her/his supervisor/co-supervisors 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/co-supervisors, the second reader, and the Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies Chair, who will moderate the oral defence.

D. University Learning Aims

Through all learning experiences, and continuing at successively higher levels across their university studies, Mount Royal University aims to provide students with the following:

Intellectual and Practical Skills	Integrative and Applied Learning	Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical, Natural, and Technological World	Personal and Social Responsibility
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Course Learning Aims

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

Intellectual and Practical Skills

The Honours thesis involves both written and oral communication. Furthermore, both the written thesis and the oral defence require that a variety of texts and media are comprehended, interpreted, and evaluated. Articulation of policy is also an integral part of the thesis.

The student's arguments in her/his thesis also require critical and creative thinking. S/he 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.

The thesis also involves information literacy and technological competence. Specifically, the literature review section of the thesis requires identifying relevant (discerning what is useful and what is less 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 the Internet.

Integrative and Applied Learning

The student will apply knowledge, skills and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems. A critical component of the thesis is addressing policy problems by applying sound and professional judgment. While writing the thesis, the student must respect

differences in opinions, views, and perspectives of the various actors in the policy process. Finally, writing a thesis requires the complete organization of one's arguments and results.

Personal and Social Responsibility

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

E. Grades

The student's grade for the Honours thesis is based upon the final written draft of the thesis, while the oral presentation of the thesis (the defence) is intended to determine whether the student thoroughly understands, and can defend, the analysis in the written thesis. Both the presentation and the final thesis will be evaluated by the supervisor/co-supervisors and an additional reader. The thesis will be graded based upon the following criteria:

- Originality of the topic: How new and interesting is the topic of the project?
- Technical execution of the analysis: How well is the analysis done? Are the results correct and plausible?
- Clarity of the written exposition: How well is the final project written? That is, how suitably has the student 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.

Percent	Alpha Grade	4-point Scale	Percent	Alpha Grade	4-point Scale
95-100	A+	4.0	67-69	C+	2.3
85-94	A	4.0	63-66	C	2.0
80-84	A-	3.7	60-62	C-	1.7
77-79	B+	3.3	55-59	D+	1.3
73-76	B	3.0	50-54	D	1.0
70-72	B-	2.7	0-49	F	0.0

F. Format of the Thesis

The format of the thesis **may** consist of the following sections (though the specific structure of the thesis will be determined by the student in consultation with the supervisor/co-supervisors):

Title page

Abstract: one page summary of the work
Table of Contents (if applicable)

Introduction
Literature Review, including any underlying theory (if applicable)
Methodology and Analysis
Policy Implications and Conclusions
References
Appendix (if applicable)

G. Thesis Policies

Honours students will be provided with a Policy Studies' Honours Information Handbook.

Format of Assigned Work: The thesis must be typed, with acceptable formats for citation, bibliography and appendices (see Honours Information Handbook).

Policy on Lateness: Due dates are binding. Late theses are not accepted without either prior arrangement or a compelling, verifiable reason.

The use of generative artificial intelligence (genAI) tools and apps is strictly prohibited in the writing of the honors thesis, unless explicitly stated otherwise by the thesis supervisor. Unsanctioned use of genAI may be considered a form of cheating.

**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS, JUSTICE, AND 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. It must be completed, signed by both the student and supervisor, and submitted to the EJPS Department Office (EA 3039) with their application to the Policy Studies Honours program.

Student Information:

Name: _____ ID# _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Thesis Information:

Supervisor's Name: _____ Thesis Term: _____

Brief Description of Project (including policy relevance 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, proposed 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 in Policy Studies Information Handbook.