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## RMES POLICY ON "FAST-TRACKING" – version 1/22/09

This document outlines the RMES policy on the possibility of MA/MSc students transferring into the PhD program without having completed requirements of the master's program ("fast-tracking"). The Faculty of Graduate Studies (FoGS) provides minimum criteria for fast-tracking, appended below. RMES maintains more stringent criteria.

### Context

"Fast-tracking" is not encouraged for RMES 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 RMES students, who are generally new to interdisciplinary studies and pursuing areas different from their undergraduate training.

As "fast-tracking" is not the RMES 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).

### Degree requirements

Master's students who "fast-track" must, if they do not have a prior master's degree (e.g., in another field), still complete all RMES master's-level coursework requirements. All Masters course work (12 RMES credits + 12 elective credits) must be completed within the first 12 months of study. This pushes the student to his/her highest level, and provides the student's knowledge base.

For master's students who "fast-track," the period of time they spent as a master's student is included in the expected 24-month timeframe for completing the PhD comprehensive exam. As with other PhD students, a "fast-tracked" student who has not passed his/her comprehensive exam and proposal defense within 48 months of full-time study will be required to withdraw from the program.

### Timeline

Any request for "fast-tracking" to the PhD program must be initiated and completed within the 2nd year of the student's master's program; it should preferably be started within 18 months of the start of the master's program.

### 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, FoGS requirements regarding grade point averages for "fast-tracking."
- *Clear evidence of research ability* – as indicated in the supervisor's letter, any 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 long (1 year minimum) 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 will be of PhD level.
- *Uncomplicated academic history* – Complications include changing supervisors, leaves of absence, etc.

### **Procedure**

If all of the above criteria are deemed by the supervisor as met or fulfilled, and the student and supervisor agree that "fast-tracking" would be in the student's best interests, the supervisor should submit the request to advance the student to the PhD level. The supervisor's letter should indicate and substantiate how the student is an extremely viable candidate for PhD-level work. The supervisor should attach "relevant committee meeting minutes," which are required by FoGS.

The case should be made by the supervisor to the Graduate Advisor at RMES, who will then meet with the student (or designate another IRES faculty member, as appropriate, to do so). This meeting allows the student to express his/her rationale for wishing to "fast-track."

The Grad Advisor should then forward the request, together with a written recommendation, to the Admissions Committee for a decision. If the Admissions Committee is supportive, the Graduate Advisor formally makes the request to the university. The application must meet all university (FoGS) guidelines and temporal deadlines for these cases.

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### **FoGS Policy on Fast-Tracking**

("Transfer from Master's to Doctoral Programs without Completing Master's Requirements")

<http://www.grad.ubc.ca/policy/index.asp?menu=009,004,000,000> (Accessed 1/19/07)

Students who wish to transfer from a master's to a doctoral program must have completed one year of study in the master's program with a minimum 80% average in twelve credits, of which at least nine credits must be at the 500 level or above and at least nine credits must be at 80% or above. The student must show clear evidence of research ability.

Transfer directly into a doctoral program should be accomplished after the first year of study and will not be permitted after the completion of the second year in a master's program. Transfers may not be retroactive. The transfer must be clearly justified by the student's supervisor and Graduate Program Advisor in a memorandum to Graduate Studies recommending the transfer.

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

If a student transfers from one area of specialization to another in a master's program or in a doctoral program the normal time limit for completing the degree is not affected.