



DEPARTMENT OF NUTRITIONAL SCIENCES
Faculty of Medicine University of Toronto

**GUIDELINES FOR
RECLASSIFICATION
M.Sc. to Ph.D.**

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A. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF RECLASSIFICATION IN THE DEPARTMENT

The Department does not offer direct entry into the Ph.D., thus the reclassification procedure offers a near-equivalent path for the student with a strong academic background who is certain that he/she wants to complete the Ph.D. This option is available also to the student who has established outstanding merit in their current M.Sc. program whether or not the original intent at entry into the Department had been to complete the Ph.D. Most students would be expected to complete the M.Sc. before proceeding to the Ph.D.

The normal procedure is for the student to apply for reclassification within the first year of enrolment in the M.Sc. In that circumstance, the student would retain full credit for residence time and courses completed. The student no longer retains full residence credit, rather, residence is credited only on the basis of when the reclassification should have occurred (one year maximum credit). The Department will consider but does not encourage applications filed after the first year of the M.Sc. program.

Before proceeding to recommend reclassification, the Department must be satisfied that the student is eligible for admission to the Ph.D. Reclassification is not a route into the Ph.D. for a student who does not have the basic academic qualifications at the time of first entry into the Department. Since outstanding performance is expected to justify reclassification prior to completion of the M.Sc., the normal departmental expectation is an average of at least A- in graduate courses as well as a strong undergraduate record. The evidence of course work performance in the M.Sc. program is complemented by evaluations of research performance submitted by the Student Advisory Committee and Supervisor. It is required by the School of Graduate Studies that all Departmental recommendations be based upon a reclassification interview/assessment.

For a student who is reclassified from the M.Sc. to the Ph.D., the intent is that all requirements of the normal M.Sc. (except the thesis) plus all requirements of the Ph.D. shall be completed. There is no *priori* reduction of course requirements and no expectation that the course requirements to be completed in the Ph.D. will be any different than would hold if the student completed the M.Sc. and then enrolled in the Ph.D.

B. PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

A decision to *apply* for reclassification must be decision by the student. Obviously, it must be supported by the supervisor, who must agree to supervise the student and financially support the research as well as extend his/her assurance of personal funding for the student in accord with Department policy. The M.Sc. Student Advisory Committee may or may not be continued as the Student's Advisory Committee of the Ph.D., but it should be involved in the assessment of the student, of thesis progress, and of the viability and suitability of plans for a Ph.D. thesis research project.

It follows from the above that while a proposal to reclassify could originate from the student, the supervisor or the Student Advisory Committee, it must have the support of all three before a

formal application is made to the Department (the application form, Appendix B, requires all signatures).

The first formal step in reclassification is for the student and supervisor to prepare a tentative plan for the Ph.D. program (courses) and research. This should be reviewed by the Student Advisory Committee. That committee may recommend changes in the tentative plan. When the student, supervisor and advisory committee are satisfied with the proposed program and with the student's qualifications to proceed into the Ph.D. then formal application should be made to the Department. This must be accompanied by a stated plan for the Ph.D. program that would be followed if reclassification is granted (program of course work, thesis title, statement of research hypothesis, general outline of proposed research, assurance of availability of required resources and a statement of time expected to completion of thesis, including allowance for time required to complete other Ph.D. requirements). Proposed membership of the new Advisory Committee should be indicated. A letter of recommendation from the supervisor must be included with the application. This should include an assessment of the student's research ability and scholarly potential. There must also be a statement from the supervisor that he/she is willing to supervise the student in the Ph.D. program and that he/she has access to funds (or reasonable expectation of access to funds) that will support the costs of the research planned and that will meet the Department's policy on assured personal support of the student.

On receipt of the application, the Department will (a) review the student's file and status of the M.Sc. program to assess the status of academic qualifications for reclassification, and (b) approve the Reclassification Assessment Committee composition. The Assessment Committee will be concerned first with the academic qualifications and suitability of the candidate for reclassification (includes consideration of both academic work before and during the M.Sc. and also demonstrated research ability and scholarly potential), and second, but equally important, the feasibility and suitability of the planned Ph.D. program including expected time to completion. The Assessment Committee can ask for revisions of the plans or attach a qualification to its recommendation to the Department concerning revision of the proposed Ph.D. program. It can also recommend that the application not be endorsed (with reasons given).

C. CRITERIA FOR ACCEPTANCE OF APPLICATION

The normal criteria for departmental acceptance of an application for reclassification are:

Academic Record:	A- or better standing at admission to the M.Sc.
Assessed Research Ability:	A- or better standing in graduate courses
Thesis Proposal and Associated Plans:	Strong

D. COMPOSITION OF RECLASSIFICATION ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

Based initially on SGS guidelines, the Reclassification Assessment Committee will have the following composition:

- Chair (non-voting) - Candidate's M.Sc. Supervisor
- 4 Voting Members - Graduate Department Chair or designate (not on student's committee)

- At least one member from another department (does not include cross-appointed staff) who is not a member of the existing M.Sc. Student Advisory Committee and holds a full graduate appointment.
- Two other members who hold a full graduate appointment in this or other departments of SGS (this can include members of the M.Sc. Student Advisory Committee).

Provided that the Supervisor has signed the affirmations required, and the candidate has met the declared requirements of academic standing, a simple majority vote of the Assessment Committee will constitute a decision, recommendation for reclassification.

E. Ph.D. PROGRAM PLANNING

As stated above, the Ph.D. program for the reclassified student must meet **all** of the requirements set for normal M.Sc. programs (except the thesis preparation and defense) **and** must meet all of the requirements set for the normal Ph.D. started after a M.Sc.

F. Ph.D. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

A student entering the Ph.D. from the M.Sc. is expected to sit the Comprehensive Exam within 19 months of registration. For a student reclassifying from the M.Sc. with one year of residence credit, the Comprehensive should be completed within two *residence* years of initial enrolment. This would imply that the student complete the exam within one year of reclassification (Fall or Spring of subsequent year, even though this may be before completion of all Ph.D. course work). Preparation for the Comprehensive should be taken into consideration in planning the time course of the proposed Ph.D. program.

G. CONTINUATION IN THE M.Sc.

If a student chooses not to pursue reclassification even though he/she may have declared that intent at the time of original entry, or if a student's application for reclassification is not accepted by the Department, his/her MSc. program will continue without prejudice to its normal completion in accord with Departmental policy. This does not affect in any way the student's privilege to apply for admission to a Ph.D. program on completion of the MSc. and should not prejudice decision on such an application.

H. CHANGE OF SUPERVISORS

It would only be under extremely unusual circumstances that the Department would consider a change in supervisor in association with a reclassification. Such a change implies also a change in research area and that is inconsistent with the intent of the reclassification. If a change in supervision is contemplated, the normal and appropriate procedure would be first complete the MSc. and to then initiate a new Ph.D. program.

It is quite acceptable, and often very appropriate, to change the composition of the Advisory Committee in part or in total as a part of the reclassification procedure.

I. DATE OF APPLICATION FOR RECLASSIFICATION

The reclassification examination is to be held within 18 months of registration in the Masc. program.

J. FORMS AND GUIDELINES

Attached is a guideline for preparation of the thesis proposal (Appendix A) and a set of sample forms for use in applications for reclassification (Appendices B, C and D).

K. APPEAL PROCEDURE

In the event that the Department declines to endorse and forward an application for reclassification, the student may appeal the decision. The normal procedure would be to first discuss the decision and perceived basis of appeal with the Graduate Coordinator, obtaining such clarifications of rules and procedures as may be necessary. An actual appeal should be directed to the Chair of the Graduate Department and should specify the actual grounds on which the appeal has been put forward (usually appeals would relate to perceived irregularities of procedure, bias on the part of those making decisions, or misinterpretation of evidence presented. An appeal based on the student's or supervisor's opinion as contrasted to the opinion of the Assessment Committee is unlikely to be acted upon). Further appeals may be made (after Departmental appeals have been considered) to the School of Graduate Studies.

**GUIDELINE FOR PREPARATION OF Ph.D. THESIS PROPOSAL
FOR CONSIDERATION IN RECLASSIFICATION**

The thesis proposal is a formal document that, if approved, will be submitted to the School of Graduate studies in support of a recommendation for reclassification. It should be prepared with this in mind. While there are no firm “rules” for its format, the following guidelines are offered:

- The proposal should contain sufficient background and data to convince the Reclassification Assessment Committee that there is a good Ph.D. thesis opportunity in the work proposed.
- It should provide sufficient description of planned studies to convince the committee that the work is feasible and that the time required for its completion is reasonable if all goes well.

The proposal should include the following elements:

- A concise literature review with sufficient discussion to provide committee members adequate background to assess the merit of the proposed work. [Should set up the question/hypothesis and provide indication of where it will fit in the field.]
- A clear statement of the hypothesis to be tested (or specific question to be addressed) and the objectives of the proposed research.
- A description of the analytical methods, treatments, source of subjects (if human studies) and planned procedures of statistical analyses. [Interest here is in the research design and in the state of existing preparation for the planned research.]
- A description of work completed (by the applicant) to date and as detailed an account as possible of the work remaining to be done. [Together, work done and work to be done should relate to the total Ph.D. thesis research as specified by the hypothesis and objectives above.]
- A brief discussion of the anticipated outcome, the significance of the planned work to the field, and the relative originality of the planned research.
- An estimate of the time required to complete the planned research, together with indication of factors that might affect that projected time line.

Although the above is structured in the general configuration of a thesis, it is not expected that it would carry the usual depth of a thesis (e.g. in the literature review).

APPLICATION FOR RECLASSIFICATION

*****To be Completed by Student*****

I _____ hereby apply for reclassification from the M.Sc. program in which I am enrolled to a Ph.D. program. I provide the attached description of the proposal Ph.D. research and am award of the proposed Ph.D. program outlined below. I recognize also that if my application is accepted, I cannot return to the M.Sc.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

*****To be Completed by M.Sc. Advisory Committee and Supervisor*****

Existing M.Sc. Thesis Title: _____

Date of Entry Into M.Sc. Program (if more than one year has passed from date of entry, add explanatory note concerning reason for delay in reclassification recommendation): _____

Proposed Ph.D. Program

Thesis Title: _____

Course Work (include courses already completed marked with *): _____

Proposed Supervisor (add explanatory note if different from existing supervisor): _____

Proposed Ph.D. Advisory Committee: _____

Cont'd. Over

We have reviewed the above Ph.D. program proposal and the attached thesis research proposal and recommend to the Department of Nutritional Sciences that the applicant be assessed for reclassification into the Ph.D. program.

M.Sc. Advisory Committee

Name:

Signature:
(Indicating Concurrence)

_____ Supervisor	_____
_____ Member	_____
_____ Member	_____
_____ Member	_____
_____ Member	_____
_____ Member	_____

*****To be Completed by Supervisor*****

If this student is reclassified into the Ph.D. program, I agree to accept the responsibilities of supervision including the responsibility to provide space and financial support for the research described in the attached proposal and the obligations toward personal funding through the Ph.D. program as stipulated in the Department policy on assured funding.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Note: The supervisor should not sign and submit this form until all documentation is ready. In addition to the thesis proposal and this recommendation form, the documentation should include a brief C.V. of the student.

**Recommended Composition of
RECLASSIFICATION Assessment Committee**

Graduate Appointment

	Yes	No
Chair (non-voting) – M.Sc. Supervisor: _____	<u>X</u>	_____
Members:		
Department Rep./Designate: _____	<u>X</u>	_____
Outside Department: * _____	<u>X</u>	_____
Others: + _____	<u>X</u>	_____
_____	<u>X</u>	_____
_____	<u>X</u>	_____

Proposed Date and Time: (Room 423, FitzGerald Building, Appox. 3 hours)

I certify that the proposed examiners have agreed to serve and are available on the proposed date and time.

_____	_____	_____
Student	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Supervisor	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Grad Coordinator	Signature	Date

* Not cross-appointed or member of M.Sc. Advisory Committee
+ 3 required with a full graduate appointment

*****For Departmental Use*****

Departmental Comment of Proposal: _____

Qualifications of Candidate: _____

Suitability of Thesis: _____

Assessment Meeting Scheduled for: _____

Or other action taken: _____

RECOMMENDATION FOR RECLASSIFICATION

Student: _____

Supervisor - Current _____

- Proposed _____

Date of Entry into M.Sc.: _____

Date of Meeting: _____

<u>Assessment:</u>	Strong	Adequate	Inadequate
Student - Background Preparation	_____	_____	_____
- Research Ability	_____	_____	_____
- Maturity and Suitability	_____	_____	_____
Proposed Research Program			
	Yes	No	
- Meets Ph.D. Expectations in Scope and Length	_____	_____	
- Meets Expectations in Terms of Student Work and Time	_____	_____	
Proposed Academic Program			
	Yes	No	
- Meets SGS and Dept. Req'ts.	_____	_____	
- Consistent with Student's Background and Needs	_____	_____	

Recommendation:

Members (initials):	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Consensus
Reclassify	Yes	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	
	No	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	

If Recommendation is to Reclassify

_____ The Research Proposal and Academic Program are deemed satisfactory as proposed.

_____ Changes should be made in the final program (attach recommendation or qualification; include any deficiencies in academic background that should be made up in the Ph.D. program).

Assessment Committee Members:

	Dept.	SGS Status*	Signature
Chair (non-voting): _____	_____	---	_____
Members: _____	_____	---	_____
_____	_____	---	_____
_____	_____	---	_____
_____	_____	---	_____
_____	_____	---	_____
_____	_____	---	_____

* F = Full Member
A = Associate Member

* F = Full Member
A = Associate Member
C = M.Sc. Advisory Committee Member

CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

This list is intended to assist members in systematically assessing the eligibility of an applicant for reclassification.

Student Name: _____

1. Student

Adequacy of background preparation and grade Achievement (undergraduate and graduate)	Strong	_____
	Adequate	_____
	Inadeq.	_____

<i>Demonstrated</i> Research ability and potential (including the Understanding of research planning and research design)	Strong	_____
	Adequate	_____
	Not yet Shown	_____

Overall maturity and suitability for the Ph.D. program at the time. Do you <i>judge</i> this student to be a good candidate for the Ph.D., aware of implications and commitments involved, and seriously interested in pursuit of research?	Ready for Ph.D. Now	_____
	Premature	_____

Comments:

Cont'd Over

2. **Ph.D. Program Proposal Research Plan**

Has an outline of the proposal research been submitted and reviewed? Yes _____ No * _____

Is the proposed research an extension of the M.Sc. project or a new area? M.Sc. _____ New _____

Is the research as proposed likely to be adequate in scope and depth to meet the Ph.D. expectation that the final thesis will make "an original contribution to knowledge"? Yes _____ No** _____

Is the proposed research reasonable in terms of the expectations placed upon the student and is it reasonable in terms of likely time required for completion? Yes _____ No** _____

Is there a reasonable assured source of funds and other resources (including access to subjects in clinical work) to support the research? Yes _____ No** _____

3. **Academic Program Plan**

Has a proposal for course work and other program components to be completed been submitted and reviewed? (It should have a time schedule as well as course identifiers.) Yes _____ No* _____

Are the proposals consistent with Departmental and School of Graduate Studies *requirements*? Yes _____ No** _____

Are the proposals consistent with the student's background and needs? Yes _____ No** _____

Comments:

* If no proposal was offered, the Assessment Committee must either reject the application or adjourn without decision.

** If there is doubt about any of these, the assessors should probe the suggested solutions before reaching a recommendation on reclassification and should comment on these in the final report.