

Schulich School of Education

PhD Handbook

Graduate Studies in Education



NIPISSING
UNIVERSITY

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This handbook is for general information purposes for current and interested PhD students. For official university policies, procedures, and program regulations, please consult the current university Academic Calendar. Where there may be a discrepancy between what is written here and the Academic Calendar, the formal Academic Calendar shall be deemed correct.

Overview

Grounded in the context of a post-modern society, and recognizing the importance of multiple perspectives, our PhD in Education (Educational Sustainability) prepares students from a variety of fields including education, health, social work, business, social justice, and administration for sustainable educational practices in the 21st century.

Within the program, students and faculty members ask questions that take into account the social context in which we live, consider the ways in which the world is interrelated, holistically accept “responsibility for present and future generations,” and “actively contribute to societal transformation” (UNESCO, 2021). Student research interests can be found at <https://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/school-graduate-studies/phd-education/our-phd-students>.

Faculty research interests include: Indigenous education, adult learning, holistic education, narrative inquiry, arts-informed research, policy analysis, student and family engagement, technology, servant leadership, special education, multi-literacy education, social justice and cultural studies, and experiential learning. Faculty research interests can be found at <https://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/school-graduate-studies/phd-education/research-supervisor>.

The program consists of two summer residencies supplemented by three online courses that allow students to continue full-time or part-time employment throughout the degree. The degree is designed for educators and other professionals who want to deepen their critical thinking and bring a richer understanding of education and sustainability to their professional roles.

Interested in Applying?

Please visit “Supplemental Forms” at www.nipissingu.ca/registrarforms for the PhD admission requirements and how to apply. Review our program outcomes (page 3) and the PhD Journey (page 4) to see if this is the program for you. Meet Our PhD students at <https://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/school-graduate-studies/phd-education/our-phd-students> and our PhD faculty at <https://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/school-graduate-studies/phd-education/research-supervisor>.

Already Accepted?

Welcome! Read on for more detail and resources to support you on your journey! As you read, keep track of questions you might have – those that need to be answered prior to the summer institute and those that might spark conversation with your colleagues and summer residency faculty.

Check your admission package and keep an eye on your Nipissing University email (see <https://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/school-graduate-studies/phd-education/program-information/summer-residency-schedule>) for information regarding our summer institutes and special activities planned for the summer residency. Please note that you should be in a position to dedicate yourself full-time to both summer residencies. In general, we do our best to begin after the Canada Day weekend (as elementary/secondary education has ended for the year) and extend four weeks beyond.

Still Have Questions?

Feel free to reach out to our Chair of Graduate Studies in Education at graded@nipissingu.ca and/or our Graduate Studies Office at sgs@nipissingu.ca for further information or clarification. If it’s a great question, we just might add it to our PhD Handbook!

What do we mean by *Educational Sustainability*?

It is important to explore what we mean by educational sustainability, acknowledging that there is no one single definition that fits all individuals in all contexts. Our focus is, therefore, on supporting students to understand what educational sustainability means to them in an ever-changing world. On a holistic level, we encourage students to explore, interrogate, and reflect on social, economic, and ecological conditions that are increasingly characterized by change, uncertainty, risk, and complexity. Our view of sustainability is emergent, dynamic, and interdisciplinary; we intentionally blur boundaries that may result from false dichotomies such as personal and professional, individual and collective, and human-made and natural. We embrace a wide variety of perspectives, experiences, and expertise, lifelong and lifewide perspectives on learning, and a vast landscape of educational spaces (informal, nonformal, formal).

Educational sustainability is not a subject or a discipline that stands alone, but instead permeates all that we do, particularly in higher education spaces characterized by conversations and agendas related to employability, student success, inclusion and diversity, innovation, internationalization, and planning for the future. Educational sustainability means conducting research, learning, and teaching across disciplines, cultures, and nationalities. Our ultimate goal for educational sustainability is to develop self-knowledge and an understanding that the relationship of the self to people, to nature, and to things is at the core of becoming an educated person. We embrace a global vision of education that includes “people of all genders, ages, present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity... that enhances the cognitive, social and emotional and behavioral dimensions of learning. It is holistic and transformational, and encompasses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment itself” (<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd>).

Educational sustainability is not simply a set of practices or things for us to do, but instead is a mindset; a set of values; and a particular way of looking at, and moving within, the world. There is, therefore, no one right way to develop this mindset of open-mindedness, creativity, and a critical imagination. Necessarily then, we, as faculty and students, embody a stance that is all-encompassing, transformative, and cumulative, acknowledging past, present, and future with a focus on transformation and leaving the world a better place tomorrow than it is today; we aim to meet “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>).

In our view, educational sustainability encompasses climate justice and social justice; we fully appreciate that “the spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature” (<https://earthcharter.org/read-the-earth-charter/preamble/>). Educational sustainability is, therefore, a shared ethical framework that includes respect and care for the community of life; ecological integrity, social and economic justice; democracy, nonviolence, and peace; and interconnected environmental, economic, social, and spiritual challenges.

Reflecting our emergent and ever-changing vision of educational sustainability, faculty and students in our PhD program engage in a variety of research projects designed to forge sustainable, creative, and inclusive solutions in a wide variety of contexts. Completed dissertations of our graduates can be reviewed at <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/>.

PhD in Education (Educational Sustainability) Learning Outcomes

We are committed to a robust system of quality assurance that reflects international standards. Our program meets doctoral degree learning outcomes as specified by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (see <https://oucqa.ca/framework/part-one-quality-assurance-principles-for-ontario-universities-and-the-quality-council/>). Individual course outcomes are articulated in individual course syllabi for both required and elective courses.

Graduate Degree Level Expectations	Doctoral Degree Outcomes
Depth and breadth of knowledge	This degree extends the skills associated with the master's degree and is awarded to students who demonstrate the following: A thorough understanding of a substantial body of knowledge that is at the forefront of their academic discipline or area of professional practice including, where appropriate, relevant knowledge outside the field and/or discipline.
Research and scholarship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The ability to conceptualize, design, and implement research for the generation of new knowledge, applications, or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the research design or methodology in the light of unforeseen problems; b) The ability to make informed judgments on complex issues in specialist fields, sometimes requiring new methods; and c) The ability to produce original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, and to merit publication.
Level of application of knowledge	<p>The capacity to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) undertake pure and/or applied research at an advanced level; and b) contribute to the development of academic or professional skills, techniques, tools, practices, ideas, theories, approaches, and/or materials.
Professional capacity/ autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex situations; b) The intellectual independence to be academically and professionally engaged and current; c) The ethical behaviour consistent with academic integrity and the use of appropriate guidelines and procedures for responsible conduct of research; and d) The ability to evaluate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.
Level of communication skills	The ability to communicate complex and/or ambiguous ideas, issues and conclusions clearly and effectively.
Awareness of limits of knowledge	An appreciation of the limitations of one's own work and discipline, of the complexity of knowledge, and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines.

Faculty Advisor

To assist you as you progress through your program of study, you will be assigned a Faculty Advisor when you are admitted to the program; we do our best to align you with someone who has experience in your stated research interests. Eventually, you will use all information available to you (i.e., faculty experience and availability, faculty research interests, good fit, etc.) to select a faculty member to approach for your Dissertation Supervisor who may or may not be your assigned Faculty Advisor.

Dissertation Supervisor and Supervisory Committee

The supervisory committee is instrumental to your success in the PhD program. For this reason, you should familiarize yourself with as many perspectives and possibilities possible, including your own. Imagine this as test driving a car – you identify what you want and what you need to take you from one place to another, you explore multiple models and brands, and eventually sign the paperwork. Take time to review faculty profiles (publications, presentations, philosophies, methodologies) and, when possible, participate in departmental events that allow you to meet faculty face-to-face (virtually or onsite). As you begin to explore potential supervisors, ask lots of questions in order to find the very best fit possible. Make sure to attend research presentations as offered during the summer institutes and review the list of graduate faculty members eligible to supervise at <https://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/school-graduate-studies/phd-education/research-supervisor>. Take time to review and peruse faculty research, experience, and publications prior to making a final decision.

Please note that it is NOT necessary to select your supervisory committee immediately upon entry to the program or even prior to the end of your summer residencies. The committee does not need to be in place until course work is done and you are getting ready to prepare for comprehensive examinations.

Once a faculty member has accepted the role of Dissertation Supervisor, the Supervisor and student will establish a PhD Supervisory Committee. The Supervisory Committee is comprised of the Dissertation Supervisor and two additional committee members who will provide guidance for the comprehensive exam, research proposal, Nipissing University Research Ethics Board application, research implementation and writing, and the final defence process.

Life doesn't always go as planned and while it is a very difficult decision, you can apply to change your supervisory committee if necessary (necessary forms can be found at: <https://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/school-graduate-studies/forms-procedures/forms>).

Cohort Support AND Student-to-Student Mentoring

PhD programs, particularly when coursework is complete, can be quite isolating. It is important for you to maintain connections within your cohort as well as with students in other years. Writing groups are useful as are more informal forms of contact; prior cohorts have set up group texts, community playlists, monthly check-in sessions; self-care checks; etc. We recommend that you consult with your supervisory team about potential student-to-student contacts that extend beyond your cohort. Sustaining connections with other students (both at Nipissing and at other universities) will support your journey and enhance your experience in the program.

PhD Course Calendar Descriptions

EDUC 6116 Critical Conversations in Educational Research (required)

This course provides an opportunity for critiquing educational research methodologies and methods across time using a constructivist paradigm to link past and future practice. Through readings and class conversations, issues and perspectives are shared and developed with an eye to expanding the boundaries of educational research for the 21st century. EDUC 6116: Critical Conversations in Educational Research is a pre-requisite for EDUC 6126: Doctoral Seminar

EDUC 6117 Critical Conversations in Educational Theory (required)

This course provides an opportunity for critiquing a range of educational theorizing across time using a constructivist paradigm to link past and future practice. Through readings and class conversations, issues and perspectives are shared and developed with an eye to expanding the boundaries of educational theorizing for the 21st century. EDUC 6117: Critical Conversations in Educational Theory is a pre-requisite for EDUC 6126: Doctoral Seminar.

EDUC 6126 Doctoral Seminar (required)

The seminar offers you a forum to share work in progress and gain support and suggestions from doctoral colleagues similarly engaged in the thesis process. The program for the seminar is established by the participants and is created by the expressed needs of the group with the main focus on furthering individual's thinking and direction for thesis completion. Pre-Requisites: EDUC 6116: Critical Conversations in Educational Research and EDUC 6117: Critical Conversations in Educational Theory.

EDUC 6118 Inquiry-Based Growth & Development in Educational Sustainability (elective)

This course focuses on students' professional growth as a process of career-long personal inquiry and knowledge creation. In a collaborative context, students will explore aspects of theory and practice in adult and professional learning and apply it to their perspectives on educational sustainability.

Detailed course outcomes will be listed on individual course syllabi.

Grading in Graduate Studies

With the exception of the Comprehensive Exam and the Dissertation, the standardized grading system for graduate courses at Nipissing University is:

Graduate students must receive a grade of B or higher to receive credit for a course. The standardized grading system is provided below, along with success criteria for PhD work. Students who receive a final mark of less than 70% in one graduate course will be placed on academic probation. Graduate students who receive an F on a mandatory course may apply to the Graduate Advisor / Graduate Chair for permission to re-take the course using an [application for continuance](#). If a student receives a final mark of less than 70% in two graduate courses, the student will be required to withdraw from the university. Students who are required to withdraw from the university will not be eligible to receive funding for the remainder of the year. Students who are withdrawn from the University for academic reasons and who wish to re-apply may do so after one calendar year following the required withdrawal date.

Comprehensive Examinations

Students may begin their comprehensive examination after successful completion of the two summer residencies and course work has been completed. The comprehensive examination consists of two written qualifying papers that are typically distributed during the first year summer institute. In the papers, students are expected to bring a variety of theoretical perspectives and research methodologies to their intended area of research, consistent with the commitment to the program's interdisciplinary approach to education studies. The papers allow students the opportunity to situate their chosen area of research in the broad educational context.

Question 1:

Place your thesis project within the context of the theoretical discourses that inform educational research and scholarship. Identify at least two theoretical traditions that have informed your understanding of educational sustainability in your area.

Question 2:

Outline the methodological issues that you are considering in the design of your research study. Be clear about the ways in which the methods and methodologies being considered relate to the central problem or question that frames your study. Your discussion should be informed by relevant issues identified in your reading to date.

Tip: It is recommended that students envision the comprehensive examination questions as file folders throughout their course work into which relevant approaches, methodologies, studies, ideas, etc. can be filed.

Students must submit an application for their comprehensive examinations with their anticipated date of completion, at least four weeks prior to the intended completion date. Before submitting the preferred date for the examination, students must have defined their research area and identified their intended Dissertation Supervisor and Supervisory Team. Your Dissertation Supervisor (or Committee as decided with the student) will serve as a reader for both qualifying papers and a second reader will be selected from the core faculty for each of the theoretical and the methodological papers. The Graduate Chair will approve the submission date after consulting with the readers.

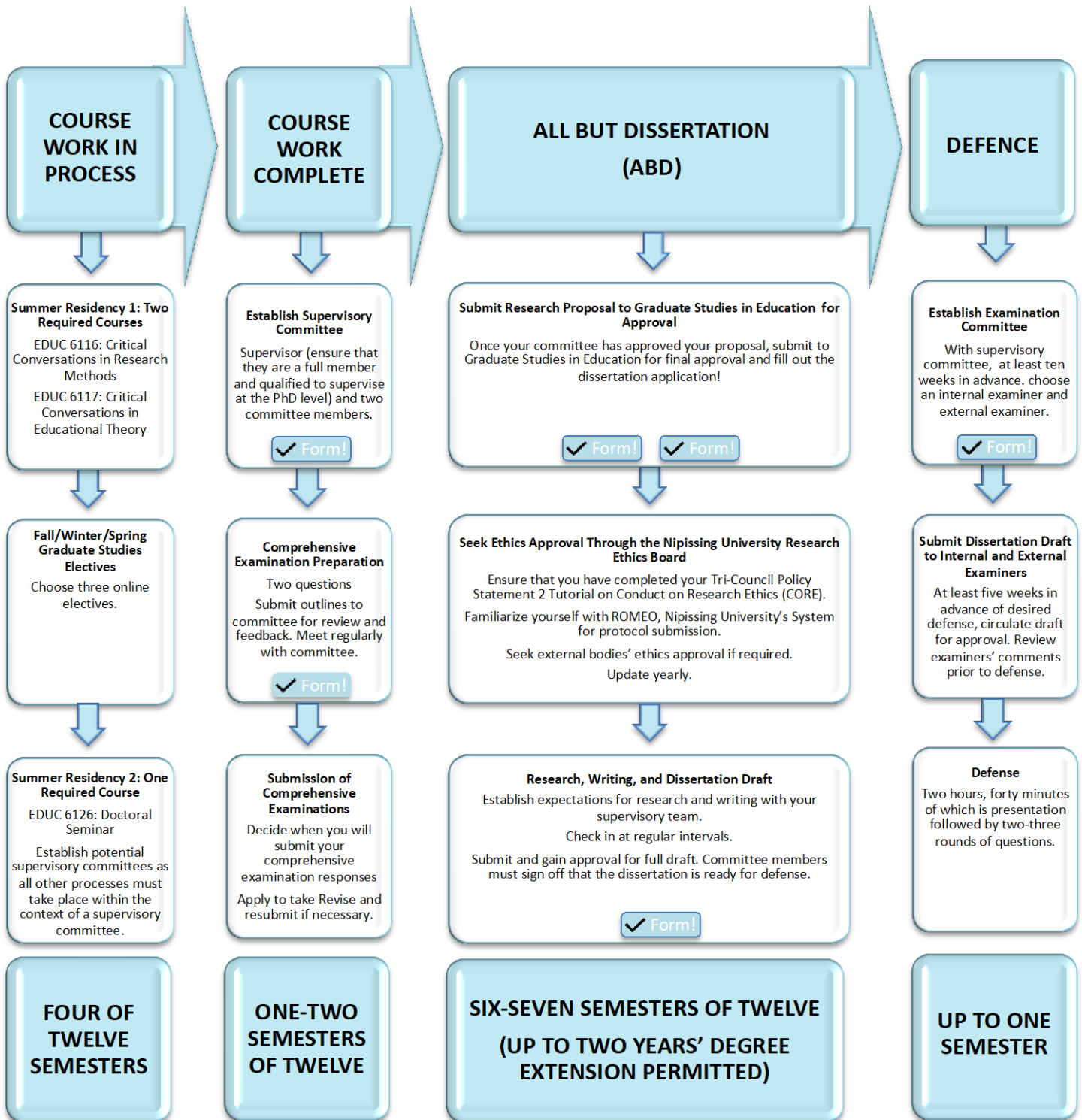
Procedures for the PhD comprehensive examination may be found at:

<https://www.nipissingu.ca/sites/default/files/2018-05/PhD%20Comp%20Policy%20-%20May%207%2C%202014%20%282%29.pdf>

The PhD Journey

The PhD program spans a twelve-term program as depicted below.

All necessary forms can be accessed at <https://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/school-graduate-studies/forms-procedures/forms>.



PhD Degree Requirements

Students must complete [30 credits](#) with a minimum of 70% in each course, as follows:

1. There are three mandatory 3-credit courses specifically designed for the PhD program:
 1. EDUC 6116 Critical Conversations in Educational Research;
 2. EDUC 6117 Critical Conversations in Educational Theory;
 3. EDUC 6126 Doctoral Seminar;and one optional PhD elective that is offered online between summer residencies:
 4. EDUC 6118 Inquiry-Based Growth & Development in Educational Sustainability
2. Participate in a summer institute residency program over two years (4 weeks each July) for required core courses (EDUC 6116 & EDUC 6117 in Year 1; EDUC 6126 in Year 2) held at the Nipissing University campus in North Bay;
3. Successfully complete three 3-credit elective graduate education courses from the current course listings as per availability throughout the calendar year;
4. Successfully complete EDUC 6127 Comprehensive Exam (2 qualifying papers) (no credit value);
5. Successfully complete EDUC 6999 Dissertation (12 credits) to the University's standard;
6. Successfully meet the degree requirements within four years of first registration.

Once students have completed their first summer residency, they may commence with the completion of three 3-credit graduate level electives. Generally, students will select courses from the current [Graduate Studies in Education course offerings](#).

Note: All scheduled graduate courses will be available to you, with the exception of the following:

- EDUC 5196 Understanding Education
- EDUC 5157 Survey of Research Methods
- EDUC 5186 Research Project and Seminar

Students must complete the PhD in Education (Educational Sustainability) program within 12 consecutive terms (four years). Students who have not completed the program after 12 consecutive terms may apply for a Degree Extension, and if granted, will be charged an extension fee per term plus ancillary fees. Under normal circumstances, a maximum of six consecutive terms may be granted in Degree Extensions.

Students may also apply for Leaves of Absences (elective, exceptional, maternal, or parental) as/when necessary.

All necessary forms can be accessed at <https://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/school-graduate-studies/forms-procedures/forms>.

University-Wide Policies and Procedures

See <https://academiccalendar.nipissingu.ca/> for a full listing of policies and procedures. We have referenced those most immediately relevant to PhD students here.

Course Registration

Through the “My Nipissing” portal students will register online for their courses as outlined in the PhD in Education (Educational Sustainability) degree requirements.

Waiting Lists

Please review the Nipissing University [policy on course waiting lists](#).

If you are on a waiting list for a course(s), WebAdvisor will contact you via your Nipissing University e-mail account if a position in the course(s) becomes available and you are next on the waitlist. From this point, you will have 72 hours to enroll in the course. If you do not enroll in the course within the specified time, without further notice, WebAdvisor will remove your name from the waitlist and offer the position to the next student on the waitlist. No student will be offered a vacant position who is not on the waitlist.

PLEASE NOTE: You may place your name on more than one waitlist. You may be enrolled in a course and place your name on one or more waitlists.

Continuous Enrolment

All graduate students are required to maintain continuous enrolment each term. The terms are Fall, Winter, and Spring/Summer. PhD students are responsible for registering themselves in their courses. In addition to your courses, PhD students will automatically be registered in GSCF 0600: Program Continuation each term, unless there are financial restrictions preventing registration.

If you fail to maintain continuous enrolment, you will be withdrawn from the program.

Progress Report

Each term, every registered student is required to submit a [progress report](#). The report details the courses that have been completed, and the academic goals of the student. It is recommended that students contact their Faculty Advisor/Supervisor to discuss their academic goals and direction, prior to the completion of the report.

Incomplete Standing

In exceptional circumstances, a student may request consideration for an Incomplete grade (INC). Such request must be submitted through the Instructor to the Dean, together with the reasons for the request.

Any student assigned an Incomplete grade must normally complete all course requirements within 30 days after the end of the examination period or the last day of the course if there is no final examination for that course. If after that period the course is not completed, a grade of zero will be assigned to those components not completed.

Appeals

Appeals are normally heard regarding possible inequities in the process used in the grading. Should a student not be satisfied with an awarded grade, they may appeal. The first level of appeal is to the course instructor. If this does not bring satisfactory results, the student may appeal to the Dean of Education and Professional Studies. If not satisfied by the Dean’s response, the student may appeal to the Admissions, Appeals and Petitions Committee of Senate.

Transfer Credits

Once students are registered in the program, they may enroll in a maximum of two 3-credit or 6-credit hours of graduate level courses, which cannot include the core courses, through another graduate program. If students have received advanced standing for courses imported into their program, these will reduce the number of courses students may take at another university, while in the program. To receive permission to take a graduate level course at another university, students are required to submit a brief description of each course they wish to take and the credit hours allocated to it. If the course is located in an Ontario university, students must complete the Ontario Visiting Graduate Student application form. If the course is accepted into the student's program, the request will be approved and forwarded to the host university.

Tuition Fees

Current tuition fees and charges are available on the Student Finance website: www.nipissingu.ca/finance/

Students are required to pay a term fee plus ancillary fees, in each of the Fall, Winter, and Spring/Summer terms for 12 consecutive terms. Please review your financial account in WebAdvisor regularly as late payments will be subject to a late fee and a financial restriction on your account will prevent you from registering in courses. Please direct your questions regarding fees and payment deadlines to our Finance Office via e-mail at finance@nipissingu.ca or visit the Finance Office in room F216.

Scholarships

There are several scholarship opportunities available to PhD students. Please visit the Graduate Funding website at www.nipissingu.ca/gradfunding/

Scholarships are paid against tuition fees through the Financial Aid office. Students are responsible for paying any fees that are not covered by their scholarship(s) by the posted deadlines. Students who have questions about scholarships they've been awarded may contact the Financial Aid Office at finaid@nipissingu.ca or (705) 474-3450 ext. 4311. Our Financial Aid office is located at F216. You may also contact the School of Graduate Studies, sgs@nipissingu.ca or (705) 474-3450 ext. 4292.

Graduate Student Office Space

Nipissing University offers myriad physical spaces that are conducive to productive research and sense of community. Graduate students study in state-of-the-art classrooms, seminar rooms, and research labs. The graduate student office (R229) provides a dedicated office space where students may complete their work.

Library

The Harris Learning Library provides 56 000 square feet of study space and the modern design features expanded print collections, a learning commons, adaptive technology and collaborative work-spaces. Nipissing users are able to search for books, journal articles, kits, and other material online by visiting [eclibrary.ca](https://www.eclibrary.ca) and choosing [Nipissing Search](#) (have your My Nipissing log-in credentials ready).

For assistance with library services, please contact the Info Desk: <https://www.eclibrary.ca/library/ask-us>.

Contact Information

School of Graduate Studies

Phone: 705-474-3450 ext. 4292

Email: sgs@nipissingu.ca

www.nipissingu.ca/graduatestudies

Chair, Graduate Programs in Education

Email: graded@nipissingu.ca

www.nipissingu.ca/phd

Admissions – Office of the Registrar

Nipissing University

PO Box 5002, 100 College Drive, North Bay, ON P1B 8L7

Phone: 705-474-3450 ext. 4761

Email: admissions@nipissingu.ca

Notes and Questions



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