



# Entry to a Doctoral Degree Without a Master's Degree and Transfer from a Master's Program to a PhD Program

## Policy and Procedures

November 19, 2025

### Purpose

Exceptionally strong students who demonstrate outstanding academic achievements and research potential may be admitted to the PhD program in Pharmacy or Nutrition without first earning a thesis-based master's degree.

The College is committed to a rigorous evaluation and selection process, and admission under this category is highly restricted. Typically, applicants will be identified from current MSc students in the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition. Although external applicants can also be considered for entry into a PhD without a master's, evaluation of student readiness is considerably more difficult without direct exposure with the student's prior academic or research work. The review committee requires clear, objective evidence for doctoral readiness, verified by multiple independent sources; otherwise, applicants will be advised to apply for (or continue in) the MSc program. This document outlines the admission requirements and application procedures to follow.

### Admission Requirements

- A four-year degree, or equivalent, from a recognized college or university in an academic discipline relevant to the proposed field of study.
- A cumulative weighted average of at least 80% in the last two years of undergraduate study (i.e., 60 credit units of course work). If currently in a master's program, a cumulative weighted program average of at least 80% in at least 9 credit units at the 800-level.
- Proof of English proficiency (see [section 1.1](#) for more information)
- Demonstrated capacity for independent thought, advanced study, and independent research. These capacities can be demonstrated through various examples from employment, education, leadership, or professional experiences (see [section 2.1](#) for more information). Evidence for suitability to enter the PhD Program must come from multiple experiences or accomplishments. Although a high academic average is important, it is not sufficient on its own to justify acceptance into the PhD program.
- Please contact the Graduate Programs Office for all other circumstances.

### Application Process

The application process for entry into the PhD program without a master's degree begins when a prospective supervisor submits a nomination package to the Graduate Chair, with a copy sent to the Graduate Affairs Office. The proposed supervisor serves as the nominator and is encouraged to assist the applicant in preparing all required materials.

The nomination package is then reviewed by the Graduate Chair and Associate Graduate Chairs, who will determine by majority vote whether the applicant may proceed to the interview stage. The supervisor does not participate in the interview or in the deliberations of the review committee.

## **Nomination Package**

For the nomination package, please include:

- The applicant's CV
- Official transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended.
- A 1-2-page letter from the supervisor describing the applicant's academic background, academic performance, research potential, research outputs, and relevant experience related to the proposed area of study.
- Two letters of reference (academic references preferred). References should be emailed directly to the Graduate Office and should not be shared with the applicant or the supervisor.

## **Interview**

Applicants deemed suitable based on their nomination package will be invited to an interview with the Graduate Chair and Associate Graduate Chairs, either in person or virtually. The purpose of the interview is to assess the applicant's readiness for doctoral-level research.

The interview panel will evaluate:

- Academic accomplishments and research potential, including evidence of independent contributions to publications and relevant knowledge and skills for the proposed PhD research area.
- Oral communication skills, such as the ability to respond effectively to questions and clearly explain complex concepts.
- Written research communication, demonstrated through examples of research writing, particularly as a primary author on published work.
- Prior research experience, including familiarity with specific research methods or analytical techniques.
- Foundational knowledge and confidence in the proposed research area, as expected of a candidate with a master's-level background.

After the interview, the review committee will deliberate, vote, and communicate the Notice of Decision within 7 days.

## **Notice of Decision**

The review committee will provide a written summary of the outcome, including a justification, to both the applicant and proposed supervisor. If the application is denied, the supervisor and applicant will have the opportunity to appeal the decision to the Associate Dean, Research, Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs.

The appeal, written by the proposed supervisor, should include:

- A clear statement of the grounds for appeal, including any procedural error, overlooked evidence, or new relevant information, and
- Any additional information not included in the original application.

Appeals will be reviewed by the Associate Dean of Research, Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs and two senior faculty who do not have any conflicts of interest with the applicant or supervisor. The appeal committee will review the submitted statement and may consult with the original review committee or

request additional information as needed. A final decision will be communicated in writing to the applicant and supervisor. This decision is not subject to further appeal.

Any member of the original or appeal review committees with a real or perceived conflict of interest (i.e., with the applicant, supervisor, or research area) will be replaced by a Pharmacy or Nutrition faculty member.

### **Specific Considerations for Master's Students Applying to Transfer to the PhD Program**

Current master's students may apply to transfer into the PhD program if the following conditions are met ([Section 4.4.5](#)):

1. The student is in the **second year** of their master's program (not earlier and not later).
2. The student has completed at least 9 credit units at the 800 level and achieved at least 80% and no grade below 70%.
3. The supervisor and advisory committee unanimously support the transfer.

Once accepted, their PhD program will be adjusted as follows:

- The PhD program start date will be backdated to the student's original master's program start date. Meaning, time spent in the master's program counts towards PhD time-in-program. External applicants, by contrast, begin their PhD program upon admission.
- All courses completed during the master's program will be credited towards PhD course requirements.
- All research conducted during the master's program can be used in the PhD dissertation. However, the student must obtain approval of their PhD research proposal from their advisory committee as soon as possible after acceptance into the program.
- The Doctoral Candidacy Assessment must be completed within **three years** of the PhD program start date (which for transfer students is their master's start date). Students admitted to the PhD program (i.e., not transferring from a master's) must complete the candidacy assessment within two years of their PhD start date.