

# What I Wish I Knew in my First Year!

## PROGRAM and SUPERVISOR

### Customize Your Program!

- ✎ It is possible to turn a project into your major research
- ✎ It is possible to push your graduation date forward for different reasons
- ✎ This program is very flexible which can be difficult if you are not focused coming into it. You can mold this program into whatever you want, but you really have to work at it!

### Can you change your advisor?

- ✎ Yes you can: you have to go to the other professor you have in mind, then negotiate the severing of ties with your current advisor
- ✎ Note: Your MRP supervisor and your advisor can be the same person
- ✎ Faculty profiles are online at: <http://fes.yorku.ca/faculty/fulltime>
- ✎ With some negotiation with the faculty, you can also have an external (non-FES) supervisor

### How do you build a strong relationship with your supervisor?

- ✎ Ask for your supervisor's advice, but make sure you do not let them steer you in a direction you do not want to go. Remember this is your education and they are in the role of a facilitator and mentor for the realization of the things you want to achieve in this program.

### How do you get through the administrative stuff?

- ✎ Stay on top of it! Work through the processes early so that it doesn't create bigger issues! Ensure that you learn to navigate the **Dossier system**. [Most forms are available here](#) and on your Dossier.

## **What are your suggestions to ensure you get everything administrative completed on time?**

- ✎ It is difficult, try to stay organized but also hold the administration accountable where necessary.
- ✎ Establish a good relationship with your supervisor who may know how to get things done and can really support you in pushing things through administratively.
- ✎ Some things will fill up (e.g. The Business Certificate Program), so you'll have to push for it and be organized to stay on top of things!

## **Are there any alternative course options?**

- ✎ Research other departments and schools for other courses you can take (you do not have to pay more tuition for courses at other Ontario schools); there is some paperwork involved so stay on top of it!

## **Is there a limit to how many courses you can take outside of FES but within York? And is there a limit for courses in other schools?**

- ✎ For those in other departments at York, supervisors can support you in courses that are ideal for you to apply to that don't reflect courses already offered at FES. You will have to fill-out departmental forms for both FES and the other department hosting the course.
- ✎ There is a cap on the number of York-external courses that FES students are allowed to take during their Masters. Please contact OSAS for more details on this.

## **What about concurrent certifications?**

- ✎ Outside of FES there are additional certificates that you can do concurrent with your MES (e.g. CERLAC). Also, be sure to inquire with OSAS as to the existing certificates you can complete along with the MES degree.

## **What about my MRP?**

- ✎ Do a methodology course if you are planning on working with human participants
- ✎ Also, make sure you know what you need to do around ethics and research both here and internationally if you are working in another country (MES Clerk can help with this)
- ✎ You need to complete a Risk Assessment Form for ALL international research work. See forms on your Dossier or at: <http://fes.yorku.ca/students/current/mes/forms>
- ✎ Ethics review process is required at FES for research/projects involving human

participants. See forms on your Dossier or at:  
<http://fes.yorku.ca/students/current/mes/forms>

- ✎ FGS and CUPE offer Fieldwork Cost Funds and Research Cost Funds, upwards of \$2000 (for flight cost and other costs); the application is around March and they need a copy of your ethics review; You CAN apply for it retroactively
- ✎ GSA and GESSA also have research travel funds, and other kinds of funding so look at those as well
- ✎ Joseph Cesario ([icesario@yorku.ca](mailto:icesario@yorku.ca)): coordinates funding for us

## **You CAN do your research and MRP work in your first year!**

- ✎ It also can give you a whole year to write and complete your thesis/paper
- ✎ This is a lot of preparatory work in your first year but it can be worth it
- ✎ The Transitions Course will give you time to prepare for your MRP (and it counts as a course). Inquire about this option with your advisor/supervisor

\*Make sure you have completed all of your administrative work before you begin your research.

## **Treat this program as a stepping-stone to what you want to do next!**

- ✎ For example, if a PhD is your next step, you might want to get grades from your professors in each course; apply for scholarships and find avenues to publish your written and/or artistic work)

# **PRAXIS and GOING INTO THE FIELD**

## **Journaling!**

- ✎ Writing consistently in a journal helps you link the material from your POS, GA assignment and course work. It's also helpful for final reports and tracking the changes in your interests and growth. Additionally it will help with your final defense and MRP.

## **Praxis!**

- ✎ Past students have found success in working while studying to apply their education to practice and vice versa. Students can get hands-on experience by taking practicum courses where they receive credits for working or interning in an organization in their field.

## Volunteer when you can, where you can!

- ✎ Volunteering can help to create opportunities for you within the program (e.g. you can use some of the work for credit)

## POS + MRP + GA position linking

- ✎ Be a strategic student – your POS is a roadmap, your MRP is your final product, your GAship can really supplement the rest of your work in a practical way

## Networking

- ✎ Start with attending events and connecting with classmates, get on the radar of professors (includes doing well in classes)
- ✎ Your colleagues in this program will be some of your biggest and most important supports for getting you through
- ✎ Get beyond the walls of York: go to conferences, seminars, workshops, meet people outside of York in your field
- ✎ Have an elevator pitch: a short blurb about your work
- ✎ LinkedIn and other social networking sites help you find ways to connect with people after you have met them
- ✎ York has business cards: \$50 for 250 ([at York Printing Services next to Scott Library](#))

## Presenting

- As soon as you have something you can present you should do poster presentations at conferences, speak at conferences, etc.
- ✎ York printing can do posters
- ✎ Posters at conferences are a good way to get into conferences
- ✎ Industry and others: mainly for networking purposes
- ✎ You may have the opportunity as part of your GA position to travel and present

# SUPPORT RESOURCES

## Involvement in Committees

- ✎ [ACE](#): student mentorship network that focuses on peer support and equity considerations within FES and the academy overall. ACE also organizes workshops, seminars and events around these issues.  
<http://aceatorku.wordpress.com/>
- ✎ [GESSA](#): A portion of your student levies goes to the Graduate in Environmental

Studies Student Association, which offers MES students things like access to a Research and Travel Fund; social events and certain GSA services.

## How does the Research and Travel Fund work?

- ✎ A mass email is sent out each semester for the research expenses incurred in the previous semester (e.g. the call for [Fall RTF applications](#) goes out in the Winter). This process makes sense because the applications require that you provide receipts for your research related travel expenses. [GESSA](#): for more details.
- ✎ Remember that your advisor/supervisor have to sign off on these research related 'excursions' so don't travel anywhere without getting consent to do so by your advisor/supervisor as you may not be eligible for refunds in such instances.

## Writing support: Individual tutor and workshops

- ✎ York has a [writing department](#) for your own personal writing counselor. They will sit with you for an hour to look through your work.
- ✎ This is in addition to Ray Bennett [rbennett@yorku.ca](mailto:rbennett@yorku.ca) – the FES tutor

## Services for students with disabilities

Testing for learning disabilities: [Center for Counseling and Learning Disabilities](#)

## Funding opportunities: OGS, SSHRC, CIHR awards and more!

- ✎ If you are interested in the aforementioned external scholarships, see Joseph's emails ([jcesario@yorku.ca](mailto:jcesario@yorku.ca)) for details and go to the respective award website and apply!
- ✎ Attend the FGS organized workshops on the process for applying (Emails sent out on listserv)
- ✎ The Accessibility Community Equity (ACE) committee has also been a part of organizing grant writing workshops. Visit: <http://aceatorku.wordpress.com/> for an updated schedule in September.
- ✎ [Pivot COS funding](#) – matches you with all funding opportunities you might be eligible for
- ✎ Awards are available throughout the year at York U. You can fill out a [Student Financial Profile](#) and see what awards you are eligible for FES also has internal awards available at <http://fes.yorku.ca/financial/grad>
- ✎ Other York Award info can be found on the links on this page: <http://fes.yorku.ca/financial>

## Teaching Assistantship (TAship)

- ✎ Blanket application forms are available during first semester until the end of January; fill out the application form for all departments and courses you are interested in

- ✎ Submit it on a per program basis (hand a copy of your application into each department you want to work with, e.g. social sciences)
- ✎ TAships offer more funding than RA and GA positions. Keep in mind that it requires more work
- ✎ Consider whether a TA position will help you with your next steps (e.g. pursuing teaching or a PhD)

## OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### Can you undertake your MRP study in any other country?

- ✎ Absolutely! You do need to make sure you complete the necessary administrative steps!

### What do you need to think about if you're interested in a PhD?

- ✎ Get some scholarships and funding
- ✎ Get marks/grades rather than the FES specific 'pass' or 'fail'
- ✎ Get out there to share your work, e.g. in conferences, presentations, written and artistic publications

### What do you do if you are having trouble writing your POS and getting your thoughts on paper?

- ✎ The [York Writing Department](#) which you can sign up for online is very helpful
- ✎ Ray Bennett ([rbennett@yorku.ca](mailto:rbennett@yorku.ca)) the writing tutor, is also a resource for writing support
- ✎ Pair yourself with someone who has specialized in the areas that you need support in
- ✎ Note: In your final exam you have to show how your MRP fulfills the requirements that you lay out in your POS

## STUDENTS OF PARTICULAR STREAMS

### International Opportunities

- ✎ Las Nubes Project, international course in Costa Rica: <http://www.lasnubes.org/>
- ✎ York International Internships: <http://international.yorku.ca/internships/>

## **Would you still be eligible for York International funding if you do your internship with an organization York International does not have a relationship with?**

- ✎ No, York International will only fund internships in organizations they are affiliated with
- ✎ However, other bodies at York will fund other kinds of international research such as the [LaMarsh Centre for Child and Youth Research](http://www.yorku.ca/lamarsh/): <http://www.yorku.ca/lamarsh/>
- ✎ There are other ways of accessing funding as well. You will want to start your entire process for searching, applying to and securing funds early! Some scholarships are available all year round on a rolling basis like the Research Travel Fund through GESSA and similar types of funding through the GSA. Other scholarships and funds are available on a seasonal basis.

## **What about internships for Planners?**

- ✎ You can secure an independent internship outside of the York International Internship Program. You also have the option to work an internship during the summer of your second year.

## **How do you make sure you can get planning certification if your topic is kind of “far out there”?**

- ✎ Your mentor in the process will be responsible for determining its eligibility
- ✎ They look more on progress broadly, and how you are developing as a professional and the exam is an additional check and balance.
- ✎ Laura Taylor ([taylorL9@yorku.ca](mailto:taylorL9@yorku.ca)) will help you with your process
- ✎ Your OPPI student rep can support you with this process as well