

Handbook for MA degree in Celtic Studies 2024-2025

St. Francis Xavier University



Picture: The Druids: Bringing in the Mistletoe (1890), by George Henry and Edward Atkinson Hornel

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Foreword

This handbook for the MA degree in Celtic Studies is to be used in conjunction with the more general Graduate Studies Handbook of St. Francis Xavier University in order to provide (prospective) students with further information regarding this specific MA program. A copy of this handbook, and additional information on applying to Graduate Studies programs can be found on the StFX Graduate Studies website:

<https://www.mystfx.ca/graduate-studies/>

The [Graduate Studies Handbook](#) provides much more detail on general procedures, and should be consulted by any prospective students.

Should you have any additional questions after reading this handbook or the general Graduate Studies Handbook, please do not hesitate to contact the Graduate Studies Coordinator (currently Michael Linkletter).

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1. Introduction

The two-year MA program in Celtic Studies is the only graduate studies diploma in the Faculty of Arts at St. Francis Xavier University. It was offered for the first time in the 1970s. It is also the only terminal MA program in Celtic Studies in North America. The MA program in Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University has been approved by the MPHEC (Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission).

Since the department is small, there is a limit to the number of students that can be admitted to the program every year. At the moment, no more than four students are accepted each year. The small numbers allow us to offer an individualized program to students, based on their backgrounds and areas of interest.

2. Overview of the Program

The current MA program is a two-year program, worth 36 credits in total. Half of the program (18 credits) consists of coursework; the remaining 18 credits are taken up by the MA thesis. Typically, students take the majority of their coursework in the first year, and will focus their time in the second year on the thesis itself.

Upon arrival at the university, and in consultation with the Chair of the Department and the Graduate Studies Coordinator, students choose one of two streams: Gaelic or Medieval Celtic Studies. The Gaelic stream focuses predominantly on Gaelic language, literature and culture in Nova Scotia; the Medieval Celtic Studies stream focuses on Old Gaelic and medieval Celtic literatures and cultures. The thesis of the student will reflect the chosen stream. Students are required to retain an average of 70 for their coursework. No final mark for a course can be lower than 65. See further the general Graduate Studies guide.

2.1 Required courses

Students of both streams, including the Modern Gaelic stream, MUST take the course Old Gaelic (6 credits), as Old Gaelic (also referred to as Old Irish) lies at the basis of Modern Gaelic, and is, together with Middle Welsh, the most important medieval Celtic language.

2.2 Optional courses

The other 12 credits of coursework are made up of 2 distinct courses: 1) individual Directed Study courses, in which students work on a particular topic; 2) high-level BA courses, of which the assignments, tests, and requirements have been altered to reflect the fact that the student is an MA student. A typical example of this might include an MA student being required to write longer or supplemental papers of an academic standard, teaching a class on a particular topic, or receiving supplemental reading. Depending on the interests of the students, this may include courses on Gaelic history, folklore, Medieval Irish literature, Medieval Welsh literature and Selected Topics courses.

Students should note that a number of courses are taught on a rotating schedule, these courses may not be offered as BA courses each year.

2.3 Supplemental courses

MA students are strongly encouraged to sit in on any other Celtic Studies course offered by the department that may increase their understanding of the languages, literatures, and cultures of the various Celtic peoples. Examples of these courses are Celtic Civilization I and II, Gaelic I. This is strictly on a voluntary basis, and will not be for credit.

After an individual program of study has been agreed upon, this program will be submitted to the Dean of Arts for approval.

2.4. Timeline per year

Please note: this is a guideline for the student. The exact program may vary per student.

Year one:

August/September

Student meets with department members to determine prospective program and identify a primary supervisor and thesis committee

Ongoing-April

Student will have identified a thesis topic together with the primary supervisor

September-April

Coursework, including Old Irish

Year two:

September:

Student gives public thesis topic presentation and will give primary supervisor a thesis schedule, detailing when they will hand in what section of the thesis

End of October:

Student fills out progress report and sends it to primary supervisor

End of January:

Student submits first version of entire thesis to primary supervisor

February 15:

Students who wish to graduate in May hand in pre-final version of thesis to primary supervisor and internal reader for feedback

Beginning of March:

Student will incorporate feedback and will return thesis to primary supervisor. Thesis will be sent out to external reader if primary supervisor and internal reader believe it is of sufficient quality, OR at the express request of the student.

End of March:

Official student thesis presentation followed by examination; student incorporates any necessary changes and undertakes the necessary steps (see next section).

3. MA thesis and supervision

The MA thesis has a value of 18 credits that represent a certain number of hours invested in the thesis. There is no fixed length for a thesis, as it can depend entirely on the topic, but typically, an MA thesis is around 150 pages in length.

During the first year of study, preferably upon arrival, the MA student finds a thesis supervisor. The thesis supervisor must be able to supervise a student based on their areas of expertise. The student then sets out to find an MA thesis topic, if necessary with the help of their supervisor.

The department will then set up a supervisory committee, consisting of the Chair of Department, the Graduate Studies Coordinator, the AVP Research and Graduate Studies, and at least one further member who will function as an external reader. Once this has been done, a [form](#) will be submitted to the Graduate Studies Coordinator, the Dean of Arts, and the AVP Research and Graduate Studies.

During the course of the first year, the student will further develop a working hypothesis or thesis topic and bibliography. The student is required to give a formal presentation of their thesis topic in a public sitting, to which the supervisory committee and the AVP Research and Graduate Studies, as well as the public at large, have been invited.

After this public presentation, which typically takes place in September of the second year (that is, at the beginning of the second year), the student will write his/her thesis. Students will set up meetings with their supervisor as required.

The thesis is to be completed and submitted for examination **no later than February 15** of the second year. At that time, the thesis will be sent to the members of the supervisory committee. If it is deemed of sufficient quality, the thesis will be sent to an external reader. If the supervisory committee feels that it is not of sufficient quality, but the student wishes to submit it for formal evaluation anyway, the thesis will be sent out for evaluation.

The student will then be required to hold another public presentation of their thesis, to which the supervisory committee members have been invited, as well as the AVP Research and Graduate Studies. In accordance with the regulations of the University, an official notice of thesis defense will be sent out.

The MA candidate, supervisory committee and the AVP Research and Graduate Studies will then retire to a different location, where the candidate will defend his/her thesis (a *viva voce* examination *in camera*).

After the defense, the committee and AVP Research and Graduate Studies will provide the candidate with feedback, typically both verbally and in the form of a written report. They will also inform the student as to whether the thesis has been accepted or rejected, and, if applicable, what changes are required before it can be accepted. The committee will fill out a [Masters Thesis Examination Form](#).

There are four possible outcomes of the examination:

- 1) the thesis is accepted as is, without any changes
- 2) the thesis is accepted pending necessary corrections and changes; student will receive a deadline for this

- 3) the thesis is rejected; the candidate has 12 months to revise and resubmit the thesis
- 4) the thesis is rejected; the candidate is not allowed to resubmit

If the thesis is accepted upon submission or resubmission, the student is required to sign the [StFX thesis non-exclusive license](#) form, and provide a final print and pdf copy of the thesis to the primary supervisor, internal supervisor, external supervisor, and the StFX library.

When this has been finalized, [final approval form](#) will be completed and submitted. The deadline for submission of this form is usually mid-April, that is to say, two weeks before convocation (for the exact convocation dates, see the Academic Calendar).

Please note that students **must register for Convocation** – otherwise they cannot graduate! Registration can be done online, and students can contact the Registrar's Office with any questions.

The thesis titles will also be added to the Léann database, hosted by Queen's University Belfast and NUI Galway, which contains an overview of theses written on the topic of Gaelic languages, literatures, and cultures (<http://www.leanniris.com/claraigh-do-thrachtas/>).

4. Progress report

After each year of study, the student and supervisory committee are required to fill out and submit a progress report to ensure satisfactory progress of the candidate. The deadline for this is October 31st. This form can be accessed via the ROMEo portal (for which you can sign up and access [here](#)).

5. Extensions

In certain circumstances, not all candidates will be able to finish their MA program within the standard two years. In such cases, students can pay a yearly continuation fee for up to three years. Should students not have finished their thesis in five years, they may under certain circumstances qualify for an extension – for further details, see the general Graduate Studies Handbook.

6. Application Process

6.1. Admission to the Program

Students wishing to apply for an MA degree in Celtic Studies are typically expected to hold a BA degree in a related field, or have otherwise studied Celtic Studies topics (e.g., learning a Celtic language as a study course). The average of the candidate's BA degree must be a 70 (see also here: <https://www.stfx.ca/applications-admissions/admissions-information/admission-requirements/admission-requirements-2>).

Prospective students should fill out the application (which you can do [here](#)). In some instances, some of the supporting documents (transcripts, letters of reference) may be mailed directly to the Admissions Office, but decisions on applications cannot be finalized until all of the documentation has been received, and applicants are responsible for ensuring all of the documentation has indeed arrived at the Admissions Office. Deadline for admission to the program if students wish to apply for StFX scholarships is **February 1**. Students typically begin their classes in September.

Students are also required to submit an **academic writing sample** of between 3,000 and 5,000 words to demonstrate their writing abilities. This sample can consist of a published article, a chapter of a BA thesis, or an upper-level undergraduate paper.

The department may decide to interview prospective candidates as well, either in person or virtually.

6.2. Student fees

The current **yearly fee** for the MA program in Celtic Studies (tuition plus fees) is \$7,613.26 for Nova Scotia students; \$8,382.94 for Canadian students and \$15,929.89 for international students. If a student takes longer than 24 months to complete a degree, they will need to pay a continuation fee, which currently stands at \$2,188.98 per annum plus ancillary fees, if applicable. A student may normally take no longer than 5 years to complete their degree. For a link to a breakdown of the college fees, see here: <https://www.stfx.ca/student-accounts>

6.3. Funding and scholarships

There are some [scholarships and funding opportunities available for MA students](#). First of all, there is a StFX postgraduate scholarship for full-time students with a value of \$8,000

per year for the first two years to help cover fees and living costs. Students may qualify for this award if they are not receiving other sources of funding.

There is one teaching assistantship, typically available for one MA student in their second year. Teaching assistants are required to work 6 hours a week for two terms; compensation is in the amount of \$3,000.

The Department of Celtic Studies offers the J.L. Campbell Bursary (see also below). The due date for that award is the beginning of November each year.

StFX offers a number of scholarships as well, some of which are open to graduate students. There are general scholarships for students who can demonstrate financial need, as well as limited bursaries. An overview of these bursaries can be found [here](#). At present, the following bursaries are open to graduate studies (or are not limited to undergraduate students; note that students should consult the website for restrictions, and for any additional bursaries that might apply to their specific situation). Bursaries that give preference to Celtic Studies students in bold:

2SLGBTQIA+ Student Bursary – up to \$1000

Aboriginal Student Bursary – up to \$1000

Ada MacNeil Wallace Bursary – up to \$1000 – for full-time female student of StFX who has demonstrated financial need

Bauer Bursary – up to \$1000

Cecilia Brennan Bursary – up to \$500

Class of 2022 Textbook Bursary – up to \$1000

Dennis MacKay Memorial Bursary – up to \$250

Dougher-Levesque Bursary – up to \$500

Dr. Burton MacDonald Memorial Bursary – up to \$2000

International Student Bursary – up to \$1000

Jeannine Deveau Aboriginal Students Bursary – Fall Term Award – up to \$500

Jeannine Deveau African Nova Scotian Students Bursary – Fall Term Award – up to \$500

J.L. Campbell Bursary – up to \$1000 for MA students; preference for Celtic Studies students

Katherine Tully Bursary – up to \$1000

Marion and Nelson MacDonald Bursary – up to \$250

Martin J. Walsh Bursary – up to \$500

Pay-It-Forward Bursary – up to \$2000

Professor Dan Gillis Celtic Studies Bursary – up to \$1500

Rev. John Archie (J.A.) Chisholm Bursary – up to \$1000

Rev. John F. Toomey Bursary – up to \$500

Rev. Leonard (Butch) MacLean Bursary – up to \$500

Rod and Betty Bilodeau Bursary – up to \$2500

Senator John MacCormick Scholarship – up to \$250

Single Parents/Married Students Bursary – up to \$500

StFX Students' Union Fall/Winter Term Day Care Bursary – up to \$500

Students of African Descent Bursary – up to \$1000

Vincent Nasso Bursary – for students of African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaw and Wulastoyik students – up to \$500

The Farrell and Edna McCarthy Bursary – up to \$500 – this is a new bursary for 2024-2025, specifically for students who are taking courses in Celtic Studies on any level. This bursary is not yet listed on the website, but will be in place as of the current academic year.

Antigonish Superstore Grocery Card bursary - \$100 per month for 8 months for a part-time or full-time student facing food insecurity, who does not have a Morrison Dining Hall meal plan.

In addition to the grants and scholarships available at StFX, there are other institutions offering grants, bursaries and scholarships to Canadian and international students, including SSHRC grants, and Nova Scotia Graduate Scholarships, and we strongly suggest students apply to these programs. Please note that scholarships have various deadlines, and you may be able to apply for scholarships after you have started. Here are some links to websites that provide further information:

<http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/index-eng.aspx>

<https://www.stfx.ca/research/student-research-opportunities/graduate-research/nova-scotia-graduate-scholarships>

<http://www.scholarshipscanada.com/>

<http://www.universitystudy.ca/plan-for-university/scholarship-opportunities-for-international-students/>

7. PhD program

While St. Francis Xavier University does not have its own PhD degree, there is currently an agreement with Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN). This agreement allows students to enroll in a PhD program at MUN while staying resident at St. Francis Xavier University. Such students will be co-supervised by faculty at both universities. This might be of particular interest to students wishing to pursue a PhD in Celtic Studies, as they might be able to enroll as a PhD student in the Folklore department at MUN. For more information, interested students can contact the Graduate Studies Coordinator for Celtic Studies (Michael Linkletter), or the Graduate Studies Office at: gradstudies@stfx.ca

Thank you for your interest in your program. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you have any questions!