

Chemistry Department expectations for the timely completion of graduate degrees

Approved June 2026

Your graduate degree is an opportunity to develop as a researcher and professional. The primary purpose of an MSc or PhD is not only to produce a thesis or dissertation, but to acquire the knowledge, skills, judgment, and research experience that will support your future career. Graduate programs in Chemistry at UVic are full-time thesis- or dissertation-based degrees in which research is the central component. This unstructured, research-driven model differs from more programmatic course-based degrees. Sustained progress is key to success. We define **timely completion** as completing MSc or PhD program requirements within 2 or 4 years, respectively.

You will have other commitments, including coursework, candidacy preparation, teaching, employment, personal activities. Balancing these commitments is an important professional skill. Maintaining steady progress in your research requires that sufficient time and attention be devoted to it throughout your degree. Because graduate research is collaborative, it is typically conducted within funded research programs and in close collaboration with your supervisor(s), normally leading to joint publications. Students are therefore generally expected to be available during regular core working hours to interact with supervisors and colleagues, while maintaining flexibility in organizing their time. Projects are defined jointly, and students are expected to focus on these agreed-upon directions while developing increasing intellectual independence.

Your thesis or dissertation describes the outcomes of your research. Because research success is inherently difficult to predict, consistent, focused effort is more important than the number of hours worked. Judge your effort by what you accomplish, not simply by the time you spend. Develop a sense of urgency in planning and completing tasks, and take intellectual ownership of your research.

Your thesis or dissertation is a program requirement, but publications, presentations, and other scholarly activities will also shape your future career. Researching the literature, writing manuscripts, analysing data, and presenting your work develop transferable skills. While undergraduate reading week offers a break from classes and TA duties, note that the department's annual research day is scheduled during that time.

Develop professional habits. Be reliable, punctual, organized, and committed to producing high-quality work. Manage your time effectively, establish productive routines, and maintain progress. Plan not only your next task, but also your work over the weeks and months ahead.

Individual supervisors will communicate any specific expectations (beyond the general ones presented here) to you in writing at the outset of your program.