

Complete Policy Title:  
**Cotutelle Policy**

Policy Number (if applicable):

Approved by:  
**Senate**

Date of Most Recent Approval:  
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Responsible Executive:  
**Associate Vice-President and Dean of  
Graduate Studies**

Enquiries:  
[University Secretariat](#)

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## 1. Introduction:

A cotutelle is a single PhD jointly awarded by two post-secondary institutions, typically from different countries. A cotutelle degree is a unique way to promote and structure research collaborations, and allows students access to a broader range of research supervision than would be available at a single institution.

## 2. Requirements:

- a) The student must meet McMaster's admission requirements.
- b) The student must apply to be in a cotutelle program within the first 12 months of their PhD study.
- c) The student is required to be registered full-time at both institutions.
- d) The student must meet the degree requirements at both institutions.
- e) Each institution must have a qualified supervisor for the student.
- f) A cotutelle Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) must be created between both institutions. At a minimum, the MOU will outline:
  - which institution is the "Home Institution" and which is the "Host Institution",

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- a listing of degree requirements for each institution,
  - who the supervisors are,
  - the residency, class, exam, and research schedule for the student,
  - financial/tuition/funding details,
  - insurance coverage and visa requirements,
  - intellectual property and publication details,
  - a schedule for progress reports and committee meetings,
  - the language of the thesis and defence (normally English), and details of the examination procedure,
  - options for completion if the supervisory relationship with either supervisor breaks down,
  - options for completion if the student fails to meet degree requirements,
  - agreement that both institutions will award a doctoral degree designated as having been completed “in cotutelle” with the other institution.
- g) The student must comply with regulations at both institutions (e.g., research ethics, etc.). The student can be processed under either university’s regulations.
- h) Generally, the student spends the majority of time at the Home Institution, with a minimum of 12 months and maximum of 24 months at the Host Institution.
- i) Students enrolled in a cotutelle program will pay tuition only to one institution at a time, normally to the Home Institution; additional administrative or ancillary fees may be required. All tuition and fee requirements should be in the Cotutelle MOU.
- j) The student will include an additional chapter in his/her thesis discussing the value added from the cotutelle work.
- k) As dictated by McMaster’s policies, there must be a formal thesis defence. The thesis defence normally will use the procedures of the Home Institution and be defended at the Home Institution with both thesis supervisors attending the defence (in person or by teleconference). The examining committee must be equally appointed by both institutions (generally 2 professors from each institution), and must include an external examiner independent of both institutions.
- l) Upon successful completion of the defence, an English language version of the final thesis will be submitted to McMaster for dissemination through the eThesis program.
- m) Wording on transcripts and degrees from both institutions must specify the degree was awarded as having been completed “in cotutelle” with the other institution.

### **3. Procedures:**

- a) The student will fill out the Cotutelle Letter of Intent with the School of Graduate Studies (SGS). This letter must be signed by the student and both supervisors.
- b) The Cotutelle Letter of Intent then will be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Associate Dean from SGS.
- c) The Cotutelle Letter of Intent is forwarded to the Office of International Affairs for the creation of a Cotutelle MOU, in collaboration with the School of Graduate Studies. The Cotutelle MOU must be approved and signed by the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies from McMaster University, and an authorized representative of the other institution, as well as by both supervisors and the student. Other signatories may be added as appropriate.
- d) The Cotutelle MOU must be completed and signed before the student attends the Host Institute.