

MDSC 508
Honours Thesis and Research Communication

Instructors: Course Coordinators and Instructors:

Dr. Fabiola Aparicio-Ting (feaparc@ucalgary.ca)
Dr. Donna M. Slater (dmslater@ucalgary.ca)

Research Communication Small Group Preceptors:

Biomedical Sciences and Bioinformatics

1. Dr. Donna Slater (dmslater@ucalgary.ca)
2. Dr. Ayan Chanda (achanda@ucalgary.ca)
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8. Dr. Ernesto Mendez Olivos (EmilioErnesto.MendezOlivos@ucalgary.ca)
9. Dr. Guido van Marle (vanmarle@ucalgary.ca)
10. Dr. Tim Ziebarth (tim.ziebarth@ucalgary.ca)

Health & Society

1. Dr. Fabiola Aparicio-Ting (feaparc@ucalgary.ca)
2. Dr. Ilona Csizmad (icsizmad@ucalgary.ca)
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4. Dr. Jesse Hendrikse (jlhendri@ucalgary.ca)
5. Dr. Jenine Leal (jenine.leal@ucalgary.ca)
6. Dr. Ping Liu (ping.liu1@ucalgary.ca)
7. Dr. Diane Lorenzetti (dllorenz@ucalgary.ca)
8. Dr. Matthew Olatubi (matthew.olatubi@ucalgary.ca)
9. Dr. Dana Olstad (dana.olstad@ucalgary.ca)
10. Dr. Gabrielle Zimmermann (glzimmer@ucalgary.ca)

Office Hours/Policy on Answering Student Emails

Please book appointments by email. Email communications with instructors or TAs are welcome. Please note that all course communications must occur through your @ucalgary email, and we will respond to emails sent via student's @ucalgary emails within 48 hours (excluding weekends and statutory holidays).

Teaching Assistant:

Jessica Wager (jessica.wager@ucalgary.ca)
Matthew Yacoub (matthew.yacoub@ucalgary.ca)

Time and Location:

Fridays 2:30pm to 4:20pm.

Please consult course schedule on D2L for room location of individual sessions

Prerequisite/Co-Requisite:

Admission to the BHSc Honours program; and [Health and Society 408](#) with a minimum grade of "B-" or [Medical Science 408](#) with a minimum grade of "B-"; and a minimum cumulative 3.30 GPA.

Course Description:

Capstone research course in the BHSc to be conducted through any one of the basic research departments. Students would be expected to conduct research. Course also involves weekly small group sessions aimed at building research communication skills. Course culminates with submission of a written thesis that is presented and defended in front of a panel of faculty members in an oral examination.

Overarching Theme

MDSC 508 is the capstone research course in the BHSc Honours program. Students conduct research projects under the supervision of University of Calgary faculty within their major and in a topic of their choosing. This course also involves weekly small group sessions aimed at building research communication and presentation skills. These sessions are discussion based, small group classes. Direct feedback is given on presentations and progress reports. These sessions fit with the overall goal of the program to develop communication skills and to stimulate, encourage and support the importance of collaboration and interdisciplinary research.

Global Objectives

MDSC 508 is a research-intensive course. The objective is for the student to demonstrate the capacity to achieve a standard of research competence as befits the relevant discipline(s).

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course and the honours thesis research project, students will be able to:

1. Search the scholarly literature systematically with a research question in mind.
2. Assess the appropriateness and limitations of using various research designs
3. Demonstrate knowledge of ethical principles in the design of a research proposal.
4. Summarize research effectively and critically.
5. Operate as a contributing member of a research team (either as a group or individually with their supervisor) working on a research project within their thesis area.
6. Communicate effectively with their research team and research supervisor to learn about the project.
7. Defend their thesis in an oral examination.
8. Appreciate the value of multiple research approaches.
9. Articulate the importance of knowledge exchange and transfer.
10. Collect, collate, critically review, and give an oral presentation summarizing the literature, relevant background information and research in progress regarding their honours thesis research project.

Transferable Skill Development:

Many of the skills and abilities that you are developing in your coursework are transferable to the workforce, graduate and professional studies and other facets of life. Employers seek applicants with transferable skills because they can be an asset in the workplace, regardless of industry or sector. Transferable skills are core skills for your success in building your future career.

The work that you will do in MDSC 508 will help you build the following transferable skills:

- **Collaboration:** Work respectfully with others from different backgrounds, cultures, and countries.
- **Verbal Communication:** Learn and share information by presenting, listening, and interacting with others.
- **Creativity and Innovation:** Find different and better ways to do things, being curious, thinking imaginatively.
- **Critical Thinking:** Actively and skillfully conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate information (data, facts, observable phenomena, and research findings) to make a reasoned judgement or draw a reasonable conclusion.
- **Digital Skills:** Use digital technologies like computers, social media, virtual meeting platforms, and the internet.
- **Information Literacy:** Find, understand, and use information presented through words, symbols, and images
- **Numeracy:** Use mathematical information such as numbers, symbols, words, and graphics to do tasks.
- **Problem solving:** Identify an issue, find and implement a solution, and assess whether the situation has improved.
- **Project Management:** Conceptualize, initiate, plan and execute a plan to achieve a predetermined goal (project) by effectively prioritizing activities and meeting deadlines.
- **Written Communication:** Share ideas and information by using words, images, and symbols.

Learning Resources

There are no textbooks or readings required for this course.

Recommended Textbooks/Readings

Supplemental resources for academic writing and oral presentations are posted on the course D2L site.

Learning Technology Requirements

Brightspace (by D2L) is located on the University of Calgary server and will be used extensively for communication with students. **It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they receive all posted communications and documents and that they receive emails sent by instructors or fellow students through D2L.** Only your @ucalgary.ca email address may be linked to D2L. Please ensure that you are regularly checking your @ucalgary.ca account.

A laptop, desktop, tablet or mobile device is required for D2L access. If you need help accessing or using D2L, please visit the Desire2Learn resource page for students: <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/d2l-student/>.

Evaluation

The University policy on grading and related matters is described in Section F of the 2025-2026 Calendar.

In determining the overall grade in the course, the following weights will be used:

Assessment *	% Grade	Due Date	Assessed by:	Learning Objectives
Honours Research Project & Thesis				
Research Proposal	10%	Thursday October 9, 2025 Submitted through D2L by 11.59pm	Supervisor and MDSC 508 team	1, 2, 3, 4
Progress Report	2%	Thursday January 15, 2026 Submitted through D2L by 11.59pm	Group Preceptors	4
Research Performance Assessment	20% total (10% Fall 10% Winter)	(Supervisor submits directly to course TAs) December 12, 2025 April 10, 2026	Supervisor	5, 6
Written Thesis	30%	Thursday March 26, 2026 Submitted through D2L by 11.59pm	Supervisor and 2 other examiners	1, 2, 3, 4
Honours Thesis Oral Exam	20%	Friday April 10, 2026 (Schedule -will be posted in D2L)	Supervisor and 2 other examiners	2, 4, 7
Research Communication (ALL Friday afternoon sessions include participation grades and required attendance)				
Research Exchange Sessions –mandatory attendance	Part of participation grade	Oct. 24, 31, Nov. 7, 21 2025 (Group schedules posted in D2L)	Group Preceptors	10
Research in Progress Oral Presentations – mandatory attendance	10%	Feb 6, 13, 27 and Mar 6, 2026 (Group schedules posted in D2L)	Group Preceptors	9, 10
Participation (class attendance, thoughtful contributions to group sessions)	8%	All scheduled classes and small group sessions	Group Preceptors	8, 9, 10

* Descriptions of each assessment item are included in the MDSC 508 Student Handbook. Templates and rubrics are posted in D2L.

** *Note:* There is no Registrar-scheduled final examination

*** *Note:* Students who do not complete the Written Thesis OR Thesis Oral Exam will be considered as not passing the course; this will be reflected on the students' official transcript as a grade of 'F'.

A Note regarding Writing Assignments:

Writing skills are important to academic study in all disciplines. In keeping with the University of Calgary's emphasis on the importance of academic writing in student assignments (Section E.2 of 2025-26 Calendar), writing is emphasized, and the grading thereof in determining a student's mark in this course. The Bachelor of Health Sciences values excellence in writing. Competence in writing entails skills in crafting logical, clear, coherent, non-redundant sentences, paragraphs and broader arguments, as well as skills with the mechanics of writing (grammar, spelling, punctuation). Sources used to complete each assessment must be properly documented, unless otherwise noted by the instructor. The University of Calgary offers instructional services through the Students' Success Centre's Writing Support Services (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/writingsupport/>) for students seeking feedback on assignments or seeking to improve their general writing skills. Students are **strongly encouraged** to take advantage of these programs.

Grading Scheme:

Letter Grade	Description	Percentage
A+	Outstanding performance	96-100
A	Excellent performance	90-95.99
A-	Approaching excellent performance	85-89
B+	Exceeding good performance	80-84
B	Good performance	75-79
B-	Approaching good performance	70-74
C+	Exceeding satisfactory performance	65-69
C	Satisfactory performance	60-64
C-	Approaching satisfactory performance	57-59
D+	Marginal pass	54-56
D	Minimal pass	50-53
F	Does not meet course requirements	0-49

Missed Components of Term Work:

Late Research Proposals, Progress Reports or The Thesis will automatically receive a 20% reduction in grade within the first 24 hours of the deadline, after which late assignments will not be accepted and will receive a mark of zero. It is the agreement of all Faculty involved in MDSC 508 that **extensions will NOT be granted** on any assignment or quizzes. The only exceptions to this are those in keeping with the University Calendar (debilitating illness, religious conviction, or severe domestic affliction) that are received in writing and with supporting documentation. Traffic jams and late or full buses are common events in Calgary and are NOT acceptable reasons for late arrivals to class, meetings and examinations. Please note that while absences are permitted for religious reasons, students are responsible for providing advance notice and adhering to other guidelines on this matter, as outlined in the University Calendar

<https://calendar.ucalgary.ca/pages/02ffccb6b1a541db880fe4223d122b5e>

As per University Calendar Section G.2.3, **students who are absent from either the Research Exchange Presentations or the Student Research in Progress presentations will receive a mark of zero on the missed component.** Students who are absent are responsible for contacting course coordinators Dr Aparicio-Ting and Dr Slater to discuss the impact of their missed assessment. Alternative opportunities for completing missed assessments or shifting of the assessment weight **may** be possible but are not guaranteed. Students who are identified as falsifying information related to missed assessments will be subject to investigation for academic misconduct.

Course Evaluations and Student Feedback

Student feedback will be sought at the end of the course through the new UCalgary Course Experience Survey and a qualitative student evaluation. Students are welcome to discuss the process and content of the course at any time with the instructor. Students may also address any concerns they may have with Dr. Fabiola Aparicio-Ting, Associate Dean (Undergraduate Health and Science Education) in the Cumming School of Medicine (feapartic@ucalgary.ca).

Attendance

Attendance is **mandatory** for all scheduled Friday afternoon sessions. There is a participation grade associated with attendance at the 'Research Exchange' and 'Research in Progress' presentation sessions where students are expected to contribute to the discussion. Absences will only be excused in keeping with the University of Calgary Calendar (debilitating illness, religious conviction, or severe domestic affliction) or at the discretion of the course coordinators, and only when the notice is received in writing and with supporting documentation. **Please notify course coordinators (Drs Aparicio-Ting and Slater) and TAs via email in advance if you know that you will to be absent from an afternoon presentation session. A 1% deduction (from the 8% available) on the grade assigned for participation will be applied for every unexcused absence.**

Conduct During Lectures

The classroom should be respected as a safe place to share ideas without judgement - a community in which we can all learn from one another. Students are expected to frame their comments and questions to lecturers in respectful and appropriate language, always maintaining sensitivity towards the topic. Students, employees, and academic staff are also expected to demonstrate behaviour in class that promotes and maintains a positive and productive learning environment.

As members of the University community, students, employees and academic staff are expected to demonstrate conduct that is consistent with the University of Calgary Calendar, the Code of Conduct and Non-Academic Misconduct policy and procedures, which can be found at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-conduct/policy>

Use of Internet and Electronic Communication Devices in Class

The Bachelor of Health Sciences program aims to create a supportive and respectful learning environment for all students. The use of laptop and mobile devices is acceptable when used in a manner appropriate to the course and classroom activities. However, research studies have found that inappropriate/off-topic use of electronic devices in the classroom negatively affects the learning of others during class time.

Students are responsible for being aware of the University's Internet and email use policy, which can be found at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-electronic-resources-and-information-policy>

Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), and specifically foundational models that can create writing, computer code, and /or images using minimal human prompting includes not only GPT-4 (and its siblings ChatGPT and Bing), but many writing assistants that are built on this or similar AI technologies.

The use of generative artificial intelligence tools and apps **is strictly prohibited** in all course assignments unless explicitly stated otherwise by the instructor in this course. This includes ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants. Use of generative AI in this course may be considered use of an unauthorized aid, which is a form of cheating and a breach of academic integrity subject to Academic Misconduct procedures. You could be asked to provide evidence of your own work. While we appreciate that the use of AI tools is appropriate in some contexts, in this course we will be focusing on building your own critical thinking, foundational knowledge and writing skills, which could be compromised by a reliance on AI tools.

Students **are not allowed** to upload class slides, assignment instructions, or other course materials to AI tools or platforms. These are the intellectual property of the course instructor (IP); uploading these to an AI platform may breach IP rules since some of these sites may use these as training/output data.

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY POLICIES AND SUPPORTS

Copyright

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy>) and requirements of the Copyright Act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks, etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-non-academic-misconduct-policy>

Instructor Intellectual Property

Course materials created by instructors (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may **NOT** be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the professor. **The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited.** Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course **at the same time** may be allowed under fair dealing.

Academic Accommodations

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations according to the University policies and procedures listed below. The Student Accommodations policy is available at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/access/prospective-students/academic-accommodations>. Students needing an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Accommodation-for-Students-with-Disabilities-Procedure.pdf>).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a Protected Ground other than Disability should communicate this need in writing to Dr. Fabiola Aparicio-Ting (feaparc@ucalgary.ca), Associate Dean (Undergraduate Health and Science Education).

Academic Misconduct

The University of Calgary is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. The University of Calgary has created rules to govern all its members regarding the creation of knowledge and the demonstration of knowledge having been learned.

Academic Misconduct refers to student behaviour that compromises proper assessment of a student's academic activities and includes (but is not limited to): cheating, fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance, failure to comply with an instructor's expectations regarding conduct required of students completing academic assessments in their courses, and failure to comply with exam regulations applied by the Registrar. **It also includes using of third party websites/services to access past/current course material, essay/assignment writing services, or real-time assistance in completing assessments, seeking answers to assessment questions and similar, whether paid, bartered or unpaid.** For information of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures, please visit;

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-academic-misconduct-policy>. Additional information is available on the Academic Integrity website at:

<https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/learning/academic-integrity>.

Recording of Lectures

Audio or video recording of lectures (or similar) by students is prohibited except where explicit permission has been received from the instructor.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Student information will be collected in accordance with typical (or usual) classroom practice. Students' assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary.

Appeals

If there is a concern with the course, academic matter or a grade, first communicate with the instructor. If these concerns cannot be resolved, students can proceed with an academic appeal, as per Section I of the University Calendar. Students must follow the official reappraisal/appeal process and may contact the Student Ombuds' Office (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/ombuds>) for assistance with this and with any other academic concerns, including academic and non-academic misconduct. Students should be aware that concerns about graded term work may only be initiated **within 10 business days** of first being notified of the grade.

<https://calendar.ucalgary.ca/pages/e31a7115dca740ec83579e946d4a4193>

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy

The University recognizes that all members of the University Community should be able to learn, work, teach and live in an environment where they are free from harassment, discrimination, and violence. The University of Calgary's sexual violence policy guides us in how we respond to incidents of sexual violence, including supports available to those who have experienced or witnessed sexual violence, or those who are alleged to have committed sexual violence. It provides clear response procedures and timelines, defines complex concepts, and addresses incidents that occur off-campus in certain circumstances. Please see the policy available at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/sexual-and-gender-based-violence-policy>

Resources for Support of Student Learning, Success, Safety and Wellness

Student Success Centre <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/>
Student Wellness Centre <http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/>
Student Advocacy and Wellness Hub (CSM)
<https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/mdprogram/current-students/student-advising-wellness>
Distress Centre <http://www.distresscentre.com/>
Library Resources <http://library.ucalgary.ca>

Wellness and Mental Health Resources

The University of Calgary recognizes the pivotal role that student mental health plays in physical health, social connectedness and academic success, and aspires to create a caring and supportive campus community where individuals can freely talk about mental health and receive supports when needed. We encourage you to explore the excellent mental health resources available throughout the university community, such as counselling, self-help resources, peer support or skills-building available through the SU Wellness Centre (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/services/mental-health-services>) and the Campus Mental Health Strategy (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>).

Student Ombuds' Office

The Student Ombuds' Office supports and provides a safe, neutral space for students. For more information, please visit www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/ombuds/ or email ombuds@ucalgary.ca

BHSc Student Faculty Liaison Committee (SFLC)

The BHSc SFLC, with elected representatives from all majors, serves to raise issues of interest to BHSc students to the program administration, including items pertaining to curriculum, scheduling and events. A list of current representatives can be found on the BHSc website.

Student Union (SU) Information

The SU Vice-President Academic can be reached at (403) 220-3911 or suypaca@ucalgary.ca; the SU representatives for the Cumming School of Medicine can be reached at medrep1@su.ucalgary.ca or medrep2@su.ucalgary.ca.

Student Success Centre

The Student Success Centre provides services and programs to ensure students can make the most of their time at the University of Calgary. Our advisors, learning support staff, and writing support staff assist students in enhancing their skills and achieving their academic goals. They provide tailored learning support and advising programs, as well as one-on-one services, free of charge to all undergraduate and graduate students. For more information visit: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success>

Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points

As part of the University of Calgary Emergency Evacuation plan, students, faculty, and staff should locate the closest Assembly Point in case of Fire Alarm. Safety signage is posted throughout the campus showing the locations and the possible route to these locations. All students, faculty, and staff are expected to promptly make their way to the nearest Assembly Point if the Fire Alarm is activated. No one is to return into campus facilities until an all clear is given to the warden in charge of the Assembly Area. For more information, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/risk/emergency-management/drills/assembly-points-and-evacuation-maps>

Safewalk

Campus security will escort individuals, day or night, anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences Centre, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). Call 403-220-5333 or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk>. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths. Please ensure your personal safety by taking advantage of this service.