The PhD degree is primarily a research degree; for that reason course work commonly comprises a smaller proportion of the student’s total program than is the case at the master’s level.

Prescribed Courses: Some departments may designate that certain courses be taken as part of the student’s background in their discipline. Other courses may be designated because of the close relationship to the research topic. It is such substantive courses that should comprise the prescribed courses in which the candidate must obtain an overall weighted average of at least 'B-' standing (see Establishment of Program (calendar.uoguelph.ca/graduate-calendar/general-regulations/student-programs/establishment-program-study/) and Prescribed Studies (calendar.uoguelph.ca/graduate-calendar/general-regulations/academic-standings/prescribed-studies/)). It is highly recommended that students admitted to a doctoral program directly from an honours baccalaureate complete at least 0.50 graduate level course credits.

Additional Courses: In addition to the prescribed courses, it is not unusual for the student to complete ancillary courses supportive of the discipline and special field. The language requirement of some departments may be most readily met by some students by completing one or more courses in the language concerned (see entry for Departments of French Studies and Languages). These courses would not be regarded as prescribed.