

DRAFT Faculty of Graduate Studies Policy on Graduate Supervision For Consultation

Graduate Supervision Guidelines

Graduate supervision is an important part of training scholars. Positive, respectful, professional, and productive working relationships are paramount to the success of graduate students and their advisors/supervisors. These guidelines are designed to support an environment where such a professional working relationship can flourish.

Guidelines for Supervisors

The supervisor's principal task consists in helping students realize their scholarly potential. This can only be accomplished in a relationship that offers insights born of experience, and furnishes the requisite challenges, stimulation, guidance and genuine support. The student has a right to expect from the supervisor expertise, accessibility and support. The supervisor must offer substantive and procedural assistance with the design, planning and conduct of feasible research projects, introduction to the network of scholars in the area of specialization, and support for the presentation and publication of the research results. At the same time the supervisor must ensure that the scholarly standards of the university and the discipline are met in the student's work. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to:

1. Be reasonably accessible to the student for consultation and discussion of the student's academic progress and research problems. The frequency of such meetings will vary according to the discipline involved and the stage and nature of the student's work, but should normally occur at least once a month, and never less than once each term.
2. Give timely response to submitted written work, with constructive suggestions for improvements. This normally means within 3 weeks or as agreed upon between supervisor and student.
3. Make satisfactory arrangements with the approval of the director of the graduate program for the supervision of the student when on leave or sabbatical, or on extended absence from the university.
4. Convene an annual meeting of the supervisory committee, normally in the spring, to evaluate the student's Report on Progress, and submit a copy of the completed Report to the Director of the Graduate Program after the meeting.
5. Ensure the student is aware of University, Faculty and program requirements and standards to which the thesis/dissertation is expected to conform.
6. Assist the student with attempts to acquire external funding, including meeting appropriate deadlines, and to engage in scholarly development (e.g., conference presentations and publications).
7. Offer supervision and advice appropriate to the stage of the student's work, helping the student to establish and modify a suitable timetable for completion of the various stages of the thesis/dissertation project:
 - at the proposal stage, assist the student with selection of a suitable and manageable topic and approach.
 - at the research stage, assist the student with initial research design and subsequent modification, with alleviating current and anticipated problems, with interpretation and analysis of findings, and with bringing the project to completion.

- at the writing stage, assist the student with appropriate and timely feedback on individual draft chapters, and with revision to the draft thesis/dissertation as an integrated whole.
 - at the oral defence stage, advise the student on preparation for the examination and assist the student to interpret and comply with any changes recommended by the examining committee, in conjunction with the Chair of the examining committee as required.
8. When the final draft of the thesis or dissertation is complete, ensure that all members of the committee have read the document and are agreed that it is ready to proceed to an oral defence. Suggest possible members of the examining committee to the program director (i.e., outside examiner, external examiner). Ensure that a master's thesis is sent to the examining committee at least 15 business days prior to the date of the examination, and a doctoral dissertation at least 20 business days prior to the date of the examination.
 9. Appropriately acknowledge in published material the contributions of the student, including consideration of joint authorship of publications. Where the student's research comprises a component of the supervisor's research program, and joint publication is envisaged, it must be recognized that the responsibility for utilization of data and for publications is held jointly by the supervisor and student. Endeavour to clarify at the outset of the supervisory relationship expectations regarding the responsibility and publication credit for work initiated, designed and researched by the student, but supported financially or otherwise by the supervisor.
 10. Conform to basic principles of academic integrity and professionalism in the development of a mature and objective relationship with the student. It must be recognized that there is a power imbalance in the supervisory relationship and that any form of harassment is unacceptable.
 11. Conform to program and Faculty processes in the event of a supervisory relationship which is unsatisfactory for any reason.
 12. Even though "each student has final responsibility for her or his academic honesty" (Senate Policy on Academic Honesty), it is incumbent on the supervisor to ensure, to the extent that it is practicable in the circumstances, the academic integrity of primary research data, and the consistency with academic integrity and practice of interpretations relating to such data.

Guidelines for Students

By entering into a graduate program, the student has made a commitment to devote the time and energy necessary to engage in research and write a thesis/dissertation which constitutes a substantial and original contribution to knowledge in a field. The supervisor has a right to expect from the student ability, initiative and receptivity. It is the responsibility of the student to:

1. Conform to University, Faculty and program requirements and procedures for completion of the graduate degree, with regard to such matters as research ethics, registration and graduation requirements, thesis/dissertation style and quality standards etc.
2. Develop, in conjunction with the supervisor and supervisory committee, an intended timetable for completion of all stages of the thesis/dissertation, and work to realize that timetable, meeting appropriate deadlines.
3. Meet regularly with the supervisor to review progress. The frequency of such meetings will vary according to the discipline involved and the stage and nature of the student's work, but should normally occur at least once a month and not less than once each term. Interact with other members of the supervisory committee as appropriate.

4. Keep the supervisor and graduate program office informed of where the student may be contacted, and respond appropriately to all communications received.
5. Prepare a Report on Progress for an annual meeting with the supervisory committee.
6. Give serious consideration to and respond to the advice and criticism received from the supervisor and the supervisory committee.
7. Recognize that the supervisor and other members of the supervisory committee may have other teaching, research and service obligations which may preclude immediate responses.
8. Recognize that where the student's research comprises a component of the supervisor's research program, and joint publication is envisaged, the responsibility for utilization of data and for publications is held jointly by the supervisor and student. In such cases, the thesis/dissertation, or draft papers, together with a copy of the raw data, shall be made available to the supervisor prior to submission for publication.
9. Conform to basic principles of academic integrity and professionalism in the development of a mature and objective relationship with the supervisor, the supervisory committee, and other scholars. The entire graduate program, including research and writing of the thesis/dissertation, shall be conducted under the strictest rules of ethics and academic honesty.
10. As stated in the *Senate Policy on Academic Honesty*, "A lack of familiarity with the Senate Policy and Guidelines on Academic Honesty on the part of a student does not constitute a defence against their application." With that in mind, it is incumbent on each student to ensure the academic integrity of his or her primary research, and of the interpretations relating to such research.

Role of the Graduate Program Office

The role of the Graduate Program Office (GPO) in supporting graduate student supervision is a very important one. The GPO is responsible for setting program expectations, ensuring that graduate students have a clear sense of what is expected of them in order to successfully fulfill their degree requirements in a timely manner. This includes setting up an explicit timeline including all project milestones.

It is the role of the GPO to keep the student informed, on track, to direct the student to relevant offices and procedures as they progress through their degree, and to participate in the resolution of any supervisor-student conflicts.

Master's Thesis Supervisory Committees

Composition of Committee

Master's thesis supervisory committees consist of a minimum of two faculty members appointed to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, at least one of whom must be from the program in which the student is enrolled, and who serves as the principal supervisor.

In exceptional circumstances, and with the prior approval of the Dean, one additional member may be appointed who is not a member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Such recommendations are to be accompanied by a brief rationale and an up-to-date curriculum vitae, which should be attached to the Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval Form (.pdf).

Approval Timelines

The membership of each master's thesis supervisory committee, including the Chair, must be recommended by the appropriate graduate program director for approval and appointment by the Dean of Graduate Studies no later than the second term of study (or equivalent for part-time students) or, for students in the Graduate Program in Environmental Studies, by the end of the third term of study.

Approval Process

Recommendation for membership of a master's thesis supervisory committee is formally initiated by the graduate program director via submission of a [Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval Form \(.pdf\)](#). The Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval Form is to be used when recommending the establishment of a supervisory committee, to add members to an incomplete committee, and to make changes to an existing committee. Final approval of supervisory committee membership recommendations rests with the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Supervisor's Roles and Responsibilities

A thesis supervisor (chair of the supervisory committee) shall:

- be reasonably accessible to the student, normally meeting at least once a month and never less than once each term; and,
- ensure that a copy of the student's thesis is sent to each member of the student's thesis examining committee as far as possible in advance of the date of the student's oral examination, but no later than 15 business days prior to the date set.

Supervisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities

A thesis supervisory committee shall:

- review a student's research proposal and recommend its approval to the appropriate graduate program director and the Dean not less than three months prior to the date set for the oral examination;
- review the student's progress from time to time, normally every six (6) months and never less than once each year. (Reports to the graduate program director of unsatisfactory progress may require a student to withdraw from a program of studies or withdraw from the graduate program in which she/he is enrolled);
- meet annually with the student, normally in the spring, to evaluate the Report on Progress submitted by the student and submit a completed copy of the Report on Progress to the graduate program director after the meeting; and,
- read the thesis and make a recommendation to the Graduate Program Director regarding the oral defence.

Doctoral Dissertation Supervisory Committees

Composition of Committee

A dissertation supervisory committee will consist of a minimum of three members from the Faculty of Graduate Studies, at least two of whom must be members of the graduate program in which the student is enrolled. The principal supervisor must be a Full Member of the graduate program in which the student is enrolled. An Associate Member of the graduate program may serve as a co-supervisor on the condition that the other co-supervisor is a Full Member of the graduate program.

In exceptional circumstances and with prior approval of the Dean, the third, or an additional member, may be appointed who is not a member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Such recommendations are to be accompanied by a brief rationale and a up-to-date curriculum vitae, which should be attached to the [Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval Form \(.pdf\)](#).

Approval Timelines

For doctoral students to remain in good academic standing, they must have a supervisor and supervisory committee in place in accordance with program requirements. The minimum Faculty of Graduate Studies requirements are as follows: A supervisor must be recommended by the appropriate graduate program director for approval by the Dean of Graduate Studies no later than the end of the fifth term of study (end of second term of PhD II). Students will not be able to register in the seventh term of study (the onset of PhD III) unless a supervisor has been approved. A supervisory committee must be recommended by the appropriate graduate program director for approval by the Dean of Graduate Studies no later than the end of the eighth term of study (end of second term of PhD III). Students will not be able to register in the tenth term of study (the onset of PhD IV) unless a supervisory committee has been approved.

Approval Process

Recommendation for membership of a doctoral dissertation supervisory committee is formally initiated by the graduate program director via submission of a [Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval Form \(.pdf\)](#). The Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval is to be used when recommending the establishment of a supervisory committee, to add members to an incomplete committee, and to make changes to an existing committee. Final approval of supervisory committee membership recommendations rests with the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Supervisor's Roles and Responsibilities

A dissertation supervisor (Chair of the supervisory committee) shall:

- be reasonably accessible to the student, normally meeting at least once a month and never less than once each term.
- ensure that a copy of the student's dissertation is sent to each member of the student's dissertation examining committee as far as possible in advance of the date of the student's oral examination, but no later than 20 business days prior to the date set.

Supervisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities

A dissertation supervisory committee shall:

- review the student's research proposal and recommend its approval to the appropriate graduate program director and the Dean not less than six months prior to the date set for the oral;
- review the student's progress normally each month and never less than once each term. (Reports to the graduate program director of unsatisfactory progress may require a student to withdraw from a program of studies or withdraw from the graduate program in which the student is enrolled);
- meet annually with the student, normally in the spring, to evaluate the Report on Progress submitted by the student and submit a completed copy of the Report on Progress to the graduate program director after the meeting; and,
- read the dissertation and make a recommendation to the graduate program director regarding the oral defence.

Annual Progress Reports

It is clearly established that completion rates are enhanced and average completion/withdrawal times reduced if supervisory committees meet regularly (at least annually) with each student, usually in the spring, and evaluate the student's activities and progress.

Master's Programs

A thesis supervisory committee shall meet annually with the student, normally in the spring, to evaluate the [Report on Progress \(.pdf\)](#) submitted by the student and submit a completed copy of the Report on Progress to the graduate program director after the meeting. In accordance with program requirements and procedures, students in non-thesis program options may be required

to submit a progress report to the graduate program director. Reports to the graduate program director of unsatisfactory progress may require a student to withdraw from a program of studies, or withdraw from the graduate program in which the student is enrolled.

Doctoral Programs

In accordance with program requirements and procedures, students in doctoral programs must submit a Report on Progress (.pdf) to the graduate program director on an annual basis, normally in the spring. Once established, a dissertation supervisory committee shall meet annually with the student, normally in the spring, to evaluate the Report on Progress submitted by the student and submit a completed copy of the Report on Progress to the graduate program director after the meeting. Reports to the graduate program director of unsatisfactory progress may require a student to withdraw from a program of studies, or withdraw from the graduate program in which the student is enrolled.

Conflict Resolution

The intent of the policy is to provide guidance regarding York University's policies, procedures and resources available to graduate students to resolve potential conflicts and problems that may arise during their program. A clear set of expectations agreed between supervisor and student at the outset of the supervisory relationship, that is reviewed regularly, is recommended to avoid many instances of conflict. However at times there are situations that require further action.

Supervisory Breakdown

Conflicts should be resolved as close to the source as possible. **Students** and **Supervisors** are encouraged to address any issues promptly and informally. The supervisor should document the discussions and keep a record of any agreements made. In the event of a conflict that resists immediate resolution, the student and/or the supervisor may approach the **Graduate Program Director (GPD)** for advice. The GPD is responsible for arranging informal consultation and mediation. The GPD, or the parties involved, may request advice and/or mediation assistance from the **Associate Dean Graduate Studies** in their Faculty. Students may seek support from the **York University Graduate Student's Association (YUGSA)**. In cases where the supervisor and the GPD are the same person, a student can seek support from the **Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS)**.

If conflicts continue to persist, any party may seek the advice of the **Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS)**. When FGS becomes aware of a supervisory breakdown, an Associate Dean of FGS reaches out to the student and invites her/him to a meeting to discuss the issue. Students may enlist YUGSA to represent them at any meeting with program and/or FGS representatives. It is important to note that neither students nor supervisors shall be required to participate in informal resolution against their wishes.

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, and the GPD determines that the supervisor-student relationship is beyond repair, the GPD will attempt in good faith to work with the student to find alternative supervision within the unit, and will keep FGS apprised of these efforts.

If the student refuses to accept the supervision provided, or if no supervision can be secured, then the student is not fulfilling the academic requirement of having a supervisor and may, on academic grounds, be withdrawn.

Patterns of unsatisfactory supervision may result in a review of a supervisor's appointment to the graduate program as per the graduate program's appointment criteria.

Conflicts related to graduate supervision may connect to, or be informed by, many university policies and procedures. Depending on the nature of the concern, other university and provincial regulations may apply. Parties to a conflict are encouraged to identify and follow the appropriate university and external policies and seek out support from university offices as those policies are applied. These policies include, but are not limited to:

Senate Policy

- [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities \(Policy\)](#)
- [Academic Honesty \(Policy\)](#)
- [Conflict of Interest for Employees \(Policy and Guidelines\)](#)
- [Gender-Free Language \(Policy\)](#)
- [Personal Relationships between Instructors and Students \(Policy\)](#)
- [Racism \(Policy and Procedures\)](#)
- [Responsibilities of Faculty Members \(Statement and Procedures\)](#)
- [Responsible Conduct of Research \(Policy\)](#)
- [Sexual Violence Policy](#)
- [Workplace Harassment \(Policy\)](#)
- [Workplace Violence \(Policy\)](#)

FGS Policy

- Academic Honesty - <http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/current-students/regulations/academic-honesty/>
- Academic Petitions and Appeals - <http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/current-students/regulations/petitions/>

Other York Resources

- Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities - <http://www.yorku.ca/oscr/studentconduct.html>

Province of Ontario

- Workplace Violence and Workplace Harassment - <https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/topics/workplaceviolence.php>

It is essential in resolving conflict that all parties have the support they require. York University Offices that may provide support include, but are not limited to:

- Centre for Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion - <http://rights.info.yorku.ca/>
- Counselling and Disability Services - <http://cds.info.yorku.ca/>
- Deans' Offices - <https://atlas.cookie.uit.yorku.ca/atlas/servlet/atlas/>
- Faculty of Graduate Studies - <http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/>
- Graduate Program Offices - <https://atlas.cookie.uit.yorku.ca/atlas/servlet/atlas/>
- Office of Student Community Relations - <http://oscr.students.uit.yorku.ca/>
- Office of the Ombudsperson - <http://ombuds.info.yorku.ca/>
- Personal Counselling Services - <http://pcs.info.yorku.ca/>
- York University Faculty Association - <http://www.yufa.ca/>
- York University Graduate Students' Association - <http://www.yugsa.ca/>