

YORK UNIVERSITY FGS GRADUATE SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

Graduate supervision serves an important role in training promising 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 in which such a professional working relationship can flourish. Students and supervisors are strongly encouraged to make use of the [Strong Start to Supervision Checklist](#) as a way of clarifying mutual expectations and setting the foundation for a productive supervisory relationship

SUPERVISORS

The supervisor's principal task consists of 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 expertise, accessibility and support from the supervisor. 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 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 once a month, and never less than once each term.
2. Give timely response to submitted written work, with constructive and concrete suggestions for improvements. This normally means within 3 weeks or as agreed upon between supervisor and student.
3. Make satisfactory arrangements in advance with the approval of the Graduate Program Director 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 Graduate Program Director after the meeting. Apart from highlighting the student's academic progress thus far, the Progress Report should also clearly identify the challenges, if any, facing the student, including considerations for students with disability.

5. In conjunction with the Graduate Program Office, 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.
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 Graduate 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 or exploitation of students is unacceptable.
11. Conform to the graduate program and Faculty processes in the event of a supervisory relationship which is unsatisfactory for any reason or in situations where there is a change of supervisors 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.

STUDENTS

By entering into a graduate program, the student has made a commitment to devoting the time and energy necessary to engage in research and writing 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 to feedback.

It is the responsibility of the student to:

1. Become informed about and conform to University, Faculty and graduate program requirements and procedures for completion of the graduate degree, with regard to such matters as degree milestones, research ethics, registration and graduation requirements, thesis/dissertation style and quality standards, year-end evaluations, etc.
2. Advise their supervisor if they are a student with a disability and discuss recommended academic accommodations and possible impact, if any, on the program.
3. 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.
4. 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 once a month, and not less than once each term. Interact with other members of the supervisory committee as appropriate.
5. Keep the supervisor and graduate program office informed of where the student may be contacted, and respond appropriately to all communications received.
6. Prepare a Report on Progress for an annual meeting with the supervisory committee.
7. Give serious consideration to and respond to the advice and feedback received from the supervisor and the supervisory committee.
8. Recognize that the supervisor and other members of the supervisory committee may have other teaching, research and service obligations that may preclude immediate responses.
9. 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.

10. Conform to the graduate program and Faculty processes in the event of a supervisory relationship that is unsatisfactory for any reason or in situations where there is a change of supervisors for any reason.
11. 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. 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.

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

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 understanding of how to successfully fulfill their degree requirements in a timely manner, and assist in resolving difficulties.

Programs differ greatly across Faculties and disciplines and therefore operate in different ways.

The GPO role in supervision may include:

- assisting students in confirming a supervisor;
- reviewing the student’s progress from time to time and reminding students of important deadlines;
- reviewing and approving supervisory committee composition;
- reviewing and filing annual progress reports, with input from both supervisors and students;
- reviewing, approving and scheduling oral defences;
- assisting and supporting students with personal difficulties impacting their progress; and
- participating in the resolution of any supervisor-student conflicts.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. FGS endorses the [Principles for Graduate Supervision at Ontario Universities](#), which reflect and expand upon York's supervisory guidelines.
2. In addition to routine use of the [Strong Start to Supervision Checklist](#), supervisors are invited to review the "[Discussion Topics to Inform Productive Supervisory Relationships Guidelines for Advisors/Supervisors and Graduate Students](#)"
3. While conflict is rare, to aid in difficult conversations, FGS has developed these [Quick Tips for Difficult Conversations](#)
4. To aid in keeping track of supervisory meeting agenda items and notes, FGS has developed a [Meeting Agenda Template](#) and a [Meeting Notes Template](#). Encouraging your student to lead their supervisory meetings and keep track of discussion is a best practice.
5. The Faculty of Graduate Studies Supervision Support Hub has a Supervision Toolkit under development.

For more information on these guidelines or to learn of activities you can be involved in regarding graduate supervision at York University, reach out to Tracy Bhoola, Program Manager of the Graduate Supervision Support Hub tbhoola@yorku.ca