

Questions to Consider Before Accepting a Graduate Student

Graduate supervision and its' related teaching and mentorship requires a significant investment of time and effort. When approached by graduate students or graduate programs to serve in a supervisory role, graduate faculty are invited to first consider several interrelated aspects. In balancing supervisory responsibilities and supervisor wellbeing, below we provide several considerations to assist faculty in their decision-making.

Capacity and Availability

- Do I have sufficient time to supervise this student effectively, without compromising my capacity to support my current students' progress?
- How many graduate students do I already have and where are they in their trajectory?
- Do I anticipate being away and unavailable for any extended absences?
- Am I available for regular meetings?
- Am I able to provide timely, thorough and constructive feedback?
- What challenges, or time constraints, or commitments, or administrative responsibilities am I facing now and in the near future that may impact being able to supervise this student effectively?

Career and Ethical Considerations

- Can I help this student achieve their academic or professional goals beyond the degree?
- Am I prepared to advocate for this student in academic and professional settings?
For example: reference letters or attendance at conferences.
- Am I able to facilitate the graduate student's intellectual growth and contribution to a field of knowledge?
- Can I support and supervise this student in an inclusive, respectful, and ethical way?

Expertise and Fit

- Is the student's proposed research within my area of expertise? Am I connected enough to the student's topic to mentor them in all phases of the research endeavour? If not, can I help the student build a committee with complementary research expertise to assist me?
- Can I provide the necessary guidance, resources, or contacts to support their research?
- Am I genuinely interested in the student's proposed research question/topic?
- Would my own research programme and background support the stated needs of the prospective graduate student?
- Does my current skill set align with what the student may need to get through the process? If not, am I willing to acquire the skill set needed to help this student?
- Do I have the necessary knowledge to supervise in the stated area of scholarly/creative focus?

Funding, Resources and Support

- Is there funding available to support this student's research? Funding may include from the supervisor, the department, the university, or external sources.
- Am I available to assist the student to pursue funding, awards and scholarships opportunities and direct them to the appropriate resources?
- Will the student have access to the resources they need to succeed? Resources may include lab/studio access, peer mentorship, or international student supports.

Institution and Program Fit

- Does the student's research align with my department's focus and the program's learning outcomes?
- Is the program structure suited to the student's goals?
- Are there adequate programmatic resources to support this student including grad-appointed faculty who can serve on the supervisory committee; opportunities to

participate in research, teaching, extracurricular activities; and engagement in a community of scholars?

Relationship Dynamics

- How might I address any personal or social, cultural, accessibility, or health challenges this student may face?
- Is there a positive dynamic in our early interactions?
- Are there any signs that this supervisory relationship might be challenging?
- Will I be able to work well with this student?
 - Do we have compatible communication styles?

Student Experience and Commitment

- Does the student show the independence, curiosity, and perseverance needed for graduate research?
- Have I discussed the demands of graduate study with the student and have learned of their preparedness and anticipatory planning?
- Does the student have the prerequisite knowledge to work in one of my areas of interest and/or scholarly capacity?
- Does the graduate student have appropriate research skills? If not, am I able to support the development of those skills?
- Am I willing to identify the student's level of dependency, and the nature of the help they require in a participatory manner?
- Am I able to focus on the abilities that the student brings to the project and on their interests and needs?

Supervision Style, Philosophy and Expectations

- Have I reflected on my own supervisory style preferences?
- Am I clear about my expectations for communication, timelines, and work quality?
- Am I willing to communicate and clarify when necessary?

- Am I willing to adapt my supervision style to fit this student's needs, or adopt different supervisory styles according to the stage of research?
- What is my philosophy concerning graduate studies and the role of the supervisor?
- Do I feel responsible for all aspects of the student's work, and do I see it as a collaborative work with other members of the supervisory committee and the student?
- Does the prospective graduate student have theoretical and philosophical assumptions similar to my own? If not, will I be able to navigate any philosophical or methodological frictions that might emerge during my supervision?
- When a student shows a lack of progress or concerning behaviour, there will be a reason. Am I willing to listen, hear and support the student?
For example, can I be sensitive to the student's needs such as work/life balance or cultural transitions?

Supervisory Wellbeing

- Do I have self-care strategies in place?
- Do I have a support system - someone to speak with, bounce ideas off of?
- Do I know where to go when I need support when dealing with a supervisory issue including conflict?
- Do I have a community of care around me that I am able to contact?