



## **GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE SUPERVISION**

**PREPARED BY THE FACULTY OF SCIENCE  
GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This updated document is intended to assist graduate students, supervisors, and supervisory committees with the supervision of graduate students. While styles of supervision vary across faculty and Departments, some general guidelines apply and they are all summarized here. In addition to definitions and regulations described in the University Calendar, specific information regarding roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in our graduate programs is described in the paragraphs that follow.

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE**

1. To review the goals of the Graduate Programs, and provide recommendations regarding the creation, termination or modification of graduate programs and courses.
2. To develop, review, and publicize program and thesis guidelines, and provide orientation on program policies and requirements.
3. To maintain a policy of student funding (Minimal Stipends) that is consistent across Departments.
4. To ensure supervisor's compliance with funding commitment offers by (a) requesting and obtaining an initial confirmation of availability of funds from UPEI Research Accounting; and (b) by coordinating the provision of the necessary personal support (stipend) from the UPEI Office of Graduate Studies, in cases where for unanticipated reasons, the supervisor's funding is lost or becomes unavailable.
5. To review applications from prospective students and to provide recommendations of acceptance or rejection to the Registrar's Office.
6. To review student academic records, providing recommendations to the Dean regarding the awarding of degrees, or courses of action for substandard performance. Similarly, to review recommendations from Department Chairs and Associate Deans for the appointment of graduate faculty.
7. To review nominations or applications for scholarships and awards from students.
8. To review Progress Reports and, in collaboration with the Supervisor, to inform the Department Chair and the Dean of the lack of research or academic progress of any graduate student.
9. To manage and chair thesis examinations, including defenses and PhD comprehensive exams (the Coordinator or a designate).
10. To provide mechanisms for resolving conflicts arising among graduate students, supervisors, and/or members of the supervisory committee.
11. To administer the funds allocated by the University to the graduate programs in the Faculty of Science.

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT**

The Chairperson in behalf of the Department to which the supervisor is affiliated (and where the student is based) has the following responsibilities:

1. To acknowledge and, if required, provide advice on the composition of the student's supervisory committee.
2. To provide access to a desk, working space and equipment as established and previously discussed with the Supervisor during the signing of the Funding Arrangement form.
3. To provide information and guidance on specific departmental regulations regarding graduate programs and the use of departmental facilities.

4. To provide appropriate graduate courses to fulfill the curricular requirements of the student in a given discipline.
5. To review the Progress Reports and, if required, inquire and/or provide advice to supervisor and supervisory committee.
6. To facilitate, in consultation with the Graduate Studies Coordinator, of alternative supervision in cases where, for unanticipated reasons, the supervisor is unable to continue to do so.
7. To acknowledge the composition of the examination committee and provide or facilitate the finding of a physical space for the examination.

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SUPERVISOR / CO-SUPERVISOR**

The primary role of the supervisor is to promote conditions conducive to a student's research training and intellectual growth. Specific responsibilities of the supervisor include:

1. To inform the Department Chair and the Graduate Studies Coordinator of the composition of the supervisory committee during the review of the student application. The composition of this committee must comply with the regulations listed in the University Calendar (\*).
2. To provide guidance about the nature and planning of the research program, the relevant literature, the research techniques/tools (including arranging for instruction, if necessary), and the training on academic integrity.
3. To meet regularly with the student and setting aside appropriate time to discuss progress and future work.
4. To contribute to the student's funding if necessary (see 10-12 below) and to the student professional development (i.e., additional scholarships) through advice and letters of reference.
5. To complete two Progress Reports per year; typically, but not necessarily, these reports will be the result of an actual meeting between the student and the supervisory committee. These reports must be submitted to the Department Chair and the Graduate Coordinator for review and signature.
6. To encourage and assist the student to present his/her work at regional, national and international conferences and to publish in peer reviewed journals or other appropriate venues.
7. To inform the student in a timely manner of inadequate progress or substandard work.
8. To request and review written work (thesis drafts, etc.) and to advise the student on quality, style, and grammar, providing constructive criticism.
9. To discuss with a student who is considering requesting a Leave of Absence the reasons and potential implications for his/her research program of such a leave. To acknowledge and/or provide explicit support for such request in the letter accompanying the leave form.
10. To secure a Minimal MSc student stipend of \$14,000/yr over the course of the degree (two years) including major (external) scholarships potentially earned by the student. Teaching Assistantships (TA) may be used to subsidize or supplement the student minimum stipend pending on Departmental availability and student suitability. If in the course of the degree the student earns additional scholarships, unless precluded by existing regulations, the new funding will supplement (not replace) the original funding. However, if the new combined stipend is above the NSERC PGS-M rate, the supervisor has the right (not the obligation) to reduce his/her original contribution to level off at the PGS-M rate. The supervisor must discuss this with the student before or during the student application for additional funding.
11. To secure a minimal PhD student stipend of \$16,000/yr over the course of the degree (four years) including major (external) scholarships potentially earned by the student. As with MSc students, TAs may be used to subsidize or supplement the minimum stipend pending on Departmental availability and student suitability. If in the

course of the degree the student wins additional scholarships, unless precluded by existing regulations, the new funding will supplement (not replace) the original funding. However, if the new combined stipend is above the NSERC-PGS-D rate, the supervisor has the right (not the obligation) to reduce his/her original contribution to level off at the PGS-D rate. The supervisor must discuss this with the student before or during the student application for additional funding.

12. To inform prospective self-funded students about the Minimal Stipend regulations and ensure they sign a completed Funding form and a waiver of Minimum Stipend form. Self-funding is not recommended in the Faculty of Science, and if exceptionally allowed, will be limited to one self-funded student per supervisor. See additional recommendations below.

(\*) In those cases where one of the co-supervisors is an Adjunct Faculty, a letter delineating the role of each co-supervisor should accompany the Funding Arrangement form during the application process. In the case where one of the co-supervisors is in a term position that potentially may not be renewed, a letter stating that the supervisory responsibilities will be eventually transferred to the (tenure-track) co-supervisor should accompany the Funding Arrangement form. In the case where there are more than 3 members (one supervisor) or 4 members (with two co-supervisors) on the supervisory committee, a letter stating the role of each additional supervisory committee member should be submitted with the Funding Arrangement form.

### **Additional recommendations regarding self-funding**

Self-funding is allowed only on a well-informed and limited basis. In principle, supervisors who hold enough funds to be able to commit to a minimum stipend are expected not to recruit self-funded students. The paragraphs below clarify the purpose and the language applicable to self-funding.

**Sponsored students**, defined as those employed or financially sponsored by government, private or public agencies are not considered “self-funded” and have no enrollment or supervision restrictions. During the application process, student and supervisor must sign the Funding form identifying the source of the funds and/or the employer or sponsor. If needed, a letter confirming the existence of an agreement of support may be requested.

**Self-funded students**, defined as those who lack a sponsor or employer and use personal funds to cover tuition fees and other expenses, have strict enrollment and supervision restrictions. In the Faculty of Science, international students and those applying to enroll in a PhD program are not eligible for self-funding. When applicable, supervisors must submit the Funding form and the Minimum-Stipend Waiver forms, both signed by the student, who unambiguously confirms the existence of means to undertake graduate studies for the duration of the program without receiving a stipend. For the duration of the program of a self-funded student, the corresponding supervisor will not be eligible to supervise or co-supervise additional self-funded students.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE**

The supervisory committee is composed of the supervisor (or co-supervisors), and at least two other graduate faculty members, at least one of whom must be from the Faculty of Science. In the case of co-supervision, one of the co-supervisors must be a member of the Department in which the student is physically based. All members of the supervisory committee are expected to participate actively in the student program. The responsibilities of the supervisory committee include:

1. To collaborate with the supervisor and approve a study program appropriate for the student's degree. Such program should include mandatory and elective courses as required by the Academic Calendar.
2. To meet with the student and collaborate closely with the supervisor on the development and monitoring of the student program, and make him/herself available for periodic meetings (signed Progress Report forms are due twice a year).
3. To review and approve the copy of the thesis that is distributed to the members of the Examination Committee before this is submitted to the external reviewer and a subsequent defense takes place.

4. To participate in the Thesis defense and provide an assessment of the student performance according to the criteria established in the Thesis Assessment Form.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT**

When a student is accepted into a graduate program, it is understood that he/she will commit the necessary time and energy on research leading to a thesis that will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in a given discipline. As such, the responsibilities of a graduate student are:

1. To be familiar with the graduate policies established in the University Calendar as well as Department regulations pertaining to graduate studies.
2. To prepare a research plan and timetable for completion of the Master's thesis, in consultation with the supervisor and other members of the supervisory committee.
3. To meet with the supervisor when requested, and to report regularly on progress, results and any significant changes that may affect the progress of the research.
4. To behave in a mature and professional manner with faculty, staff, and fellow students, as well as outside the University when engaged in academic matters.
5. To facilitate the work of the supervisor and the supervisory committee, as they are accountable for monitoring the accuracy, validity, and integrity of all facets of the student's program.
6. To discuss with the supervisor the preparation of the thesis and to decide, in consultation with the supervisory committee, when the document is ready for submission.
7. To be informed about student stipend regulations, and if applicable (self-funded students), to sign the Funding Arrangement form and complete a Minimal Stipend waiver.

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

1. If a conflict arises between the student and the supervisor or a member of the supervisory committee, attempts should be made to solve the problem amicably, with the collaboration/mediation of the remaining members of the supervisory committee. In order to prevent escalation of the problem, it is strongly recommended that those involved communicate the problem to the supervisory committee as early as possible so that the members of that committee can intervene to facilitate dialogue and identify possible solutions.
2. If discussions at the supervisory committee level do not solve the problem, the Department Chair and the Graduate Studies Coordinator should be informed and, if necessary, a case should be presented by both the student and the supervisor/member to the Graduate Studies Committee. The Graduate Studies Committee will assess the situation, explore potential solutions and make one or more recommendations to the Dean, informing simultaneously to the student and the supervisor.
3. If no solution is reached and the nature of the conflict is strictly academic, the student may pursue a formal academic appeal. The process of academic appeal is outlined in the University Calendar.

**Science Graduate Studies Committee**  
<http://science.upei.ca/graduatestudies>

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