

**GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDENT SUPERVISION & MENTORSHIP
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

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1. INTRODUCTION

As one of the most research-intensive universities in the world, the University of Toronto prides itself on providing graduate students with the opportunity for deep engagement with scholarly work within their field of study. Research-stream doctoral students are required to produce original research, complete a written thesis, and defend it at a Final Oral Examination. Similarly, research-stream master's students normally must write and defend a thesis based on original research. Many professional doctoral and master's programs also require that their students be engaged in scholarly activities under the supervision of a faculty member.

These guidelines outline the core principles of graduate supervision adopted by the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) at the University of Toronto, and some of the specific expectations and responsibilities common to graduate supervision and mentorship across the University. In so doing, they operationalize the responsibility of faculty members to have "fair and ethical dealings with students," as set out in section 2(a) of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the University of Toronto and the University of Toronto Faculty Association. They also emphasize the collaborative nature of graduate supervision by outlining the expectations and responsibilities of supervisory committee members, graduate students, graduate units, and SGS —parties who share responsibility with graduate faculty members for successful graduate education.

These guidelines are not intended to be exhaustive regarding the expectations and responsibilities of the parties engaged in graduate supervision and mentorship. There are likely additional expectations and responsibilities in each graduate unit that reflect the unit's norms

and are field- or discipline-specific. In the event of a conflict between these guidelines and any unit-specific requirements, these guidelines and SGS policies shall apply.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The broad aims of graduate supervision and mentorship are to nurture innovative thinkers and independent researchers, while leading and supporting students in meeting the academic and research expectations outlined in a graduate curriculum. To promote student success, graduate supervision and mentorship at the University of Toronto are grounded in four core guiding principles:

- 2.1 Academic Excellence and Research Integrity
- 2.2 A Collaborative Student-Centred Approach
- 2.3 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- 2.4 Promoting Wellness

2.1 Academic Excellence and Research Integrity

The University of Toronto has earned an international reputation for its research quality and high academic standards. The dedication to academic and research quality is exemplified by researchers across the institution, and imparted to graduate students during their studies. Underlying the University's achievement in academic excellence and research quality is a core commitment to research integrity. As articulated in the [Statement on Research Integrity](#), this commitment refers to how faculty and student researchers conduct and communicate their research (e.g., scientific rigour and honesty) as well as to how they conduct themselves (e.g., professionalism). Further, the [Policy on Ethical Conduct in Research](#) requires community members to follow "the highest standards of ethical conduct in every aspect of research including applications, proposals, the research itself, reports and publications." All members of the graduate community (e.g., faculty supervisors, graduate students, research staff) are therefore responsible and accountable for fostering intellectual honesty and rigour in the conduct and communication of research and scholarship. They are expected to implement these principles in all aspects of research training, supervision, and mentorship.

2.2 A Collaborative Student-Centred Approach

Another pillar of the University's academic and research success is active engagement of its graduate students. During their training, graduate students are expected to take responsibility for and demonstrate growth of their knowledge and skills, as established by the [degree-level expectations](#). While providing intellectual leadership in the context of graduate education, graduate faculty are expected to adopt a collaborative student-centred approach. This approach acknowledges students' previous educational and life experiences and emphasizes that students and their supervisory teams should collaboratively create learning objectives, including needs for broad knowledge- and skill-building, research objectives, and career plans. Each student's individual profile of strengths and development needs should be recognized and

supported in this process. All parties engaged in graduate supervision and mentorship should understand the gradual, stepwise nature of learning and prioritize the clear communication of each person's expectations and responsibilities.

2.3 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The University promotes graduate supervision that is equitable, inclusive, and embracing of diversity. As outlined in the University's Statement on Equity, Diversity and Excellence, fostering an environment characterized by equitable and inclusive practices that respect diversity and protect human rights is the collective responsibility of all members of the graduate community. SGS recognizes that integrating equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles in supervisory practices enables all graduate students across cultural, disability, socioeconomic and other differences to reach their full potential. All members of the graduate community are expected to cultivate a teaching, learning, and working environment that is free from discrimination and harassment, where everyone shares a sense of belonging, is treated with respect, and is able to fully participate. SGS works towards achieving an environment free of discrimination and harassment, while ensuring respect for the core values of freedom of speech, academic freedom, and freedom of research.

2.4 Promoting Wellness

All members of the graduate community – graduate faculty, supervisory committee members, graduate students, graduate units, and SGS – are expected to create a healthy research environment and healthy relations therein, and to promote a culture of caring at the University. The culture of caring includes acknowledging stressors that students experience during their graduate studies and promoting a reasonable work-life balance, including respect for different working patterns and times off, as well as referring students to appropriate supportive resources when necessary.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN GRADUATE SUPERVISION AND MENTORSHIP

Fundamental to graduate supervision is the idea that a group of graduate faculty members (i.e., a supervisory committee), led by a supervisor (or co-supervisors), takes primary responsibility for assisting a student in learning the principles of scholarly investigation, as well as for guiding the student through the creation of the scholarly products (papers, thesis, etc.) required for successful completion of their degree. In addition to providing academic and research guidance, a supervisor will act as a mentor for the student by helping them grow professionally, introducing them to the scholarly and professional culture in their discipline, helping them navigate the University, and pointing them to the many resources available here to assist students during their program – especially if and when they encounter obstacles that may affect their academic progress. However, graduate supervision and mentorship are collective responsibilities in which the graduate student and the graduate unit must also play an active

role, with the additional oversight and support provided by the SGS. Each of these contributors has their own roles and responsibilities, which are outlined below.

3.1 The Role of the Supervisor(s)/Mentor(s)

Although there might be some variation in the specifics of supervisory practices across fields of study/disciplines, common expectations for all supervisors generally include:

3.1.1. Academic Progress and Success

- Coach the student in the development of a research program that will meet scholarly expectations and program requirements.
- Help prepare and guide the student through timely completion of program milestones.
- Identify - in collaboration with the student - needs, skills, and knowledge gaps for their scholarly work, and guide the student in resolving these gaps.
- Provide regular assessments and supportive and timely feedback on student performance, including research projects, conference presentations, manuscripts, grants, etc.
- Offer the student regular individual meetings and regular meetings with the supervisory committee.
- Assist in understanding and navigating the funding structure of the degree and graduate unit and advise, encourage, and support student applications for grants and awards that are appropriate.
- Refer and encourage the student to engage with the appropriate University and/or graduate-unit supports and resources.
- Implement student accommodations approved by Accessibility Services in a timely manner.
- Make arrangements for the continuity of supervision, including regular meetings and feedback, in the event of a research leave; assist in facilitating continuity of supervision in the event of a personal leave.

3.1.2. Research Excellence and Integrity

- Allow the student to learn essential methodologies and concepts of the discipline, and the opportunity to conduct research of high quality and significance and receive appropriate recognition in publications, presentations, etc.
- Mentor the student to adhere to principles of research excellence and integrity to meet expectations in the field for reproducibility (where appropriate), to avoid plagiarism, and to adhere to any intellectual property requirements.
- Take responsibility for and provide academic and administrative oversight on research ethics, health and safety as well as other research processes and policies, as applicable to the research setting.
- Mentor the student to comply with all ethics and health and safety regulations applicable to the research setting.
- Understand, recognize, and address conflicts of interest in accordance with applicable University policies and guidelines.

- Establish and promote best practices in the collection and management of information/data.
- Fairly and equitably recognize student academic and professional development, and other productivity achievements.

3.1.3. Supportive and Professional Relationships

- Adhere to the principles of trust, openness, and care; this includes treating all students with respect.
- Consider each student's individual needs regarding timelines for meetings and the nature, frequency, and amount of feedback.
- Display fairness and transparency in academic assessment, grading, and evaluation.
- Handle any emerging problems in a timely fashion with compassion, clarity, and transparency. Recognize and address problems and conflicts as early as possible and engage in conflict resolution as appropriate.
- Respect boundaries between work and personal time. Respect and recognize religious or cultural observances and holidays, as well as the need for flexibility and/or time off to attend to personal responsibilities (including parental and family responsibilities) or take leaves of absence.
- Engage in a professional manner in all interactions with the student, including those conducted on social media platforms or other forms of electronic communications.

3.1.4. Scholarly Breadth and Professional Development

- Advise and support the student to develop a diverse knowledge base, methods, and professional skills.
- Support the student in exploring and developing their individual career aspirations, within and beyond academia.
- Share information and encourage engagement in appropriate events, such as workshops and conferences.
- Inform students about and promote professional expectations and best practices.
- Encourage and facilitate professional success, networking opportunities, and relationship-building within and beyond academia.
- Ensure the student understands the terms, potential benefits, and risks associated with any collaborations with external partners.

3.2 The Role of the Supervisory Committee

- Monitor and advise on academic progress and research strategies.
- Provide regular assessments and supportive and timely feedback on student performance, including, when appropriate, on research projects, presentations, manuscripts, and grants.
- Display fairness and transparency in academic assessment and evaluation.
- Provide expertise and perspectives that complement and expand upon the abilities and views of the supervisor(s), including supporting the student-supervisor relationship.
- Provide mentorship and support outside of regular committee meetings to help address questions concerning academic progress, research, and professional development.

- Evaluate thesis and research documents and, when required, provide feedback in a supportive and timely manner.
- Assist in the management of actual or potential conflicts of interest that may impact the student-supervisor relationship and affect the student's academic progress.

3.3 The Role of the Graduate Student

- As appropriate, identify a potential research supervisor or co-supervisors, obtain their agreement and graduate units approval to act as supervisor(s), and work with them to identify additional committee members.
- Be familiar with and follow the graduate unit's policies and guidelines as well as University policies and guidelines related to behaviours, practices, and expectations relevant to program requirements and student experience.
- Become familiar with the policies and regulations of the SGS, including the program requirements as laid out in the SGS Calendar.
- Establish, monitor, and update a research program in consultation with the supervisor or co-supervisor and the supervisory committee.
- Work to meet all essential program milestones and timelines to maintain [Good Academic Standing](#) and [Satisfactory Academic Progress](#).
- Establish academic and professional development plans and gain exposure to a diversity of research ideas, methods, and practices.
- Participate in training and adhere to the principles of responsible conduct of research and research integrity.
- Follow best practices in the collecting, dissemination, and management of information/data, in consultation with the supervisor.
- Understand, recognize, and address conflicts of interest in accordance with applicable University Policies and Guidelines.
- Maintain regular contact with the supervisor(s) about academic progress and needs throughout the program.
- Raise concerns with the supervisor, supervisory committee members, and/or graduate coordinator when worried about not progressing or when feeling overwhelmed.
- Be aware of services available at the unit and/or University related to academic progress, health and wellness and student-supervisor relationships and seek supports when necessary.
- Actively monitor award and conference announcements as well as attend workshops, networking events, and career fairs.
- Ensure that requests for feedback, approval, applications, and letters of recommendation and support are made with sufficient advance notice to allow deadlines to be met.
- Adhere to the principles of trust, openness, and care; this includes treating all community members (e.g., faculty, peers, undergraduate students) with respect.

- Engage in a professional manner in all interactions with community members (e.g., faculty, peers, undergraduate students), including those conducted on social media platforms or other forms of electronic communication.

3.4 The Role of the Graduate Unit

- Maintain and review Graduate Faculty Membership applications and ensure appropriate faculty qualifications for graduate supervision.
- Establish and maintain graduate student selection/admission standards appropriate for the program of study, including faculty training in the unit's standards and practices of selection/admission.
- Establish clear and transparent processes for the initiation of a supervisory relationship and the composition of a supervisory committee.
- Establish program-specific benchmarks for Good Academic Standing and Satisfactory Academic Progress.
- Develop and maintain documentation that outlines the common processes that govern a program including a graduate student handbook, website, supervisory committee forms etc.
- Share information with students and supervisors on SGS and unit-level policies, guidelines, requirements, and responsibilities as well as University services available to support faculty and students throughout the graduate lifecycle.
- Share information with students on accessing support services.
- Advise supervisors on the implementation of approved accommodations from Accessibility Services.
- Consistently monitor student progress throughout the graduate program. Increase monitoring and support for students if they become delayed in their program (e.g., require program extensions).
- Provide clear and consistent expectations in scholarly activities and civil conduct.
- Provide training in responsible conduct of research and research integrity.
- Establish a clear and transparent funding policy. Oversee funding distribution and help resolve funding-related conflicts between students and supervisors.
- Advise students about funding opportunities, financial aid, and resources available.
- Ensure potential conflicts of interest in the supervisory committee are being appropriately declared and managed.
- Ensure the names of the supervisor(s) and members of the supervisory committee of each graduate student are documented in ROSI and updated when changes are made.
- Work with students and supervisors to ensure continuity of supervision during anticipated supervisor leaves; work with students and graduate faculty to identify and appoint acting supervisors in cases of unanticipated leaves.
- In the event of conflict, support students and faculty in conflict resolution and establish a process for changing a supervisor or supervisory committee members, if needed.
- Facilitate the Final Oral Examination.

- Ensure that supervisory engagements of graduate faculty members are fairly and accurately documented and recognized during performance reviews and promotion.

3.5 The Role of SGS

- Review and grant graduate faculty memberships (GFM) to qualified faculty members.
- Set appropriate graduate supervision and appeal policies and procedures, communicate them in a clear and timely manner, and ensure that these policies and procedures are followed.
- Advise graduate units on best practices in graduate supervision and mentorship as well as policy/ guideline implementation.
- Develop and communicate to students, supervisors, supervisory committees, and graduate units the supports and services that may help facilitate an optimal graduate research experience.
- Develop and implement education and training on graduate student supervision and mentorship for graduate students, faculty, and administrators.
- Liaise with graduate programs on all matters relevant to graduate education, supervision and mentorship, including conflict resolution.

4. CONFLICT RESOLUTION PATHWAYS

As in any relationship, supervisors and graduate students sometimes experience interpersonal tension or conflict. Any anticipated or emerging problems should be addressed in a timely fashion with compassion, transparency, and clarity.

In many instances, interpersonal tension or conflict can be resolved through a direct conversation between the supervisors and graduate students. Where this is not feasible, additional support and assistance may be sought from: (a) the graduate unit (e.g., graduate coordinator/chair) and (b) the SGS [Centre for Graduate Mentorship and Supervision](#). SGS expects all graduate community members to make use of the supportive resources, as needed, to prevent the escalation of conflicts.

5. RELATED POLICIES

- [Memorandum of Agreement between The Governing Council of the University of Toronto and The University of Toronto Faculty Association](#)
- [Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Excellence](#)
- [Policy on Ethical Conduct in Research](#)
- [Policy on Conflict of Interest - Academic Staff](#)
- [Statement on Research Integrity](#)
- [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#)
- [Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy](#)
- [Good Academic Standing and Satisfactory Academic Progress, Time Limits, Supervision, and Candidacy](#)

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- [Intellectual Property Guidelines for Graduate Students & Supervisors](#)
- [Monitoring Doctoral Progress](#)
- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Leave Policy](#)
- [Personal Time Off Policy](#)

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