

Supervisor-Student Conversation Starters

The relationship between the student and the research supervisor is most important to the student's successful completion of a graduate degree. This document complements the Graduate Academic Calendar's section on roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students.¹ The following conversation starters are suggested to help align expectations of supervisors and their graduate students (adapted from the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies):

1) Communication and Professional Conduct

- Frequency of meetings to review research progress and relevant deadlines, in compliance with program policies.
- Supervision process (i.e. hands-on/hands-off, mentor/manager/colleague etc.), as well as expectations regarding the student's office/lab/on-campus attendance.
- Arrangements to ensure the continuity of supervision during leaves or extended periods of absence.
- Potential cultural factors that may influence the student's learning, research behaviour and experience.
- Frequency of advisory/supervisory committee meetings (for example, every term), and timing of progress reports and other material to be submitted in advance of scheduled meetings.
- Student's awareness of policies, rules and regulations in effect at the university as well as any communications which may be directed to them.
- Supervisor's required input when student makes important decisions about their course of study and research.
- Student's timely discussion of any foreseen prolonged absence and timing/duration of holidays.
- Student's participation in research seminars, training sessions and departmental/lab meetings that the supervisor deems relevant.

¹[The Graduate Academic Calendar](#) remains the official reference on the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and graduate students.

2) Academic Development, Mentorship and Training

- Supervisor's response to written work submitted by the student, including providing feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- Feedback on thesis drafts and writings submitted by the student in accordance with an agreed-upon schedule.
- Establishment of the supervisory committee (timelines, composition etc.).
- Student's completion of research, coursework and/or thesis within the period that is typical for specific degree program.
- Student's submission of written work and other material in a timely manner so as to receive an adequate assessment.
- Student's progress towards completion of degree and the required number of hours carrying out research activities.
- Student's responsibilities regarding ethics approval (if their research involves human, non-human animals, human tissues or records).
- Student's participation in professional skill development training offered by the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

3) Authorship, Publication and Intellectual Property

- Acknowledgement of the contributions of the student in presentations and published material, in many cases via joint authorship.
- Clarifying the criteria determining authorship order, and responsibilities for preparing and submitting for publication the results of research completed by the student as part of their degree requirements.
- Maintaining appropriate confidentiality concerning research activities, in accordance with existing practices and policies of the discipline.
- Clarifying relevant publication restrictions on the student's research such as a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) if applicable.
- Involvement in research governed by an Industry-Sponsored Research Agreement if applicable.
- Additional professional experience including sessional teaching opportunities, Graduate Teaching Assistantships or Research Assistantships.

4) Health and Safety

- Training and course(s) required for the student's study program in compliance with health and safety regulations.
- Arrangements to ensure that student's learning and research environment are safe and adequately supported.