



Department of Integrated Studies in Education PhD Supervision Letter of Understanding

*The primary goal of a PhD is for the student to become an independent researcher; as such, the supervisory relationship will change over time. Setting mutual expectations between a supervisor and supervisee, and revisiting those regularly (e.g., annually), is essential to ensuring the success of a graduate student. **All PhD students at McGill are required to complete a Supervision Letter of Understanding in their first year.***

The following questions are intended to provide clarity for the expectations between doctoral students, supervisors and committee members and to form the basis of understanding. You are not required to address every question. Instead, you are encouraged to address each question when and if it applies to the relationship as well as the nature of the intended research.

Before responding to these questions, we encourage you to see the [DISE PhD Supervision Guidelines](#) and [McGill's Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Supervision website](#). For information about Graduate Regulations at McGill, including protocols for who to contact when a student needs support, please click [here](#).

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN YEAR 1

1. Communication: How will the supervisor and student communicate with one another?

Consider the type of communication that will be used (e.g., email, text, TEAMS, phone), speed of response, when to expect/not expect responses (e.g., holidays, weekends), etiquette for communication (e.g., it is not okay to send 10 short emails in the span of a day before receiving a response), appropriate content for communication, and how to reach one another in cases of emergency or lack of response.

2. Supervisory Meetings: How will supervisory meetings be scheduled and run?

Consider frequency of meetings, focus of meetings, support provided by supervisor during meetings, expectations for preparation for meetings (e.g., student will present a written progress report, writing, and/or agenda in advance), expectations for follow-up to meetings (e.g., student will present a written summary or a follow up email), and who will be in charge of scheduling meetings (including missed meetings). (Regular contact (meetings or emails) is important. We suggest supervisors and full-time students have a formal meeting, irrespective of the number of informal meetings, at least once per term.)

3. Writing and Feedback (General): What expectations do we have for writing and feedback?

Consider plans for publication/presentations/dissemination (including plans for co-authorship), norms around order of authorship (see Appendix D in the [DISE PhD Supervision Guidelines](#)), expected timeframe to receive feedback (including what to do if feedback is not received in that timeframe), expectations for intellectual ownership of ideas (e.g., how to avoid one person feeling that the other has appropriated their ideas), what additional writing support the student should seek out (e.g., [Graphos](#), DISE writing courses), and expected time needed for additional writing support.

4. Scholarship Funding & Employment: What is the vision for the student's funding and employment?

Consider sources of funding (scholarships, RA-ships, TA-ships, course lecturer positions, other employment on or off campus), time spent on employment, and expectations for student and supervisor in securing



funding (including support that supervisors will provide for scholarship applications). *Note that all PhD students receiving departmental funding are required to apply for the SSHRC and FROSC each year they are eligible, if they do not already hold a large external scholarship.*

(for Full Time students only) Note that it is university policy that full time students should not work full time. If the doctoral student takes on substantial employment, they are required to fulfil all of the same requirements, deadlines, and expectations as other PhD students. Full time students should expect to work on their doctoral coursework and research a minimum of 40 hours per week. **If the student is taking on employment, how will they ensure that they are able to maintain satisfactory progress towards their degree?**

5. **Other Resources Available: What resources will be available to the student?**

Consider what resources will be available (e.g., office space, data collection equipment, funding for conference travel), when they will be available, and how the student can access.

6. **Expectations for Additional Learning: What additional opportunities should the student seek out?**

Consider participation in research groups, teaching, seminars or workshops (e.g., scholarship funding workshops, [SKILLSETS](#), [Graphos](#)), departmental activities (e.g., oral defense presentations, DISE talks and/or public research presentations), student groups (e.g., [EGSS](#), [PGSS](#)), and academic/non-academic leadership.

7. **Other: Is there any other information that the supervisor or student should know?**



OPTIONAL QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS IN YEAR 1 (OR REVISIT AT A LATER DATE)

1. Expected Progress towards Major Milestones: What is the approximate timeline for completing milestones?

Consider when the student should start and finish working on [Candidacy Papers](#), [Research Ethics Board training](#), [Research Ethics Board application](#), [Dissertation Proposal](#), data collection, analysis, writing of dissertation. See suggested timeline in [DISE PhD Supervision Guidelines](#). *Extending the timeline can have financial consequences for the student, so it is essential to have clear communication about the expected timeline and any anticipated changes.*

2. Writing and Feedback (Specific Milestones): What expectations do we have for writing and feedback for specific milestones?

Consider number of rounds of feedback for Candidacy Papers/Dissertation Proposal/Dissertation, dates for submission of first drafts, and what kind of feedback to expect.

3. Funding for Data Collection: Are there financial resources available to support costs of the doctoral research and data collection?

We understand the above shared expectations and will revisit them as needed.

Names	Signature	Date Confirmed
<i>Student</i>		
<i>Supervisor</i>		
<i>Co-supervisor (if applicable)</i>		

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