

Division of Clinical and Translational Research

Department of Medicine



Academic Advisor Checklist

Before the meeting:

- If PI and/or committee members are “very busy”, remind them that it is a McGill rule to hold the student’s committee meeting within a given time period each year and it is part of their academic responsibilities to dedicate working hours to participate in those meetings.
- If committee has a “very busy” PI, the student should schedule them first before sending out the Doodle poll
- Most committee meetings are currently held online, primarily using Zoom. Either the student’s PI or the AA will have to “host” the meeting. This person should familiarize themselves with the ‘waiting room’ feature in order to have discussions between committee members without the student present.
- Ensure that student sends project as well as tracking forms 1 week before the meeting at which time they should also remind committee members about the time and location of meeting
- Ask student about courses and grades they’ve obtained, to be added to the minutes
- Tell student what happens in the meeting, give them the opportunity to have questions asked either during the presentation or afterward – except for the Oral Comprehensive, which should be more formal with the questions after the presentation

At the meeting:

- The meeting starts with a short discussion about the student’s program and progress. The student is NOT present for this part of the meeting.
 - Ask PI about progress of student – strengths, weaknesses – to be recorded in the minutes
 - If student is an MSc candidate, determine whether they are interested in Fast Tracking; where they are in terms of time limitations – this should be flagged 1 year before they reach time limitation (3 years for MSc, 7 years for PhD), and recorded in the minutes
 - Ask committee members if they have any questions before the meeting starts
 - Tell the committee members that they all have to be present until the end, and if a member leaves, the meeting will have to be cancelled and re-scheduled.
 - The student is asked to come back and give their research presentation (20-30 min, not counting time for questions/answers)
- During the meeting, ensure that all committee members ask questions
- Take notes that can be converted into minutes
- Ensure that the focus is on the student and does not become a general discussion between committee members, while the student waits quietly (especially important during oral comprehensive), make sure the student answers the questions, not the supervisor
- Capture the main recommendations of the committee, to be added to tracking forms
- After the presentation and questions, the student again leaves the room for a 2nd short discussion during which it is important to ensure that all committee members participate and that all are comfortable with the outcome
- The information/recommendations/conclusions are summarized in the minutes of the committee meeting
- Ensure that everyone signs tracking forms – and checks appropriate boxes, for agreement with the outcome of the meeting and conflicts of interest

- If the meeting is via Zoom, you have the option of asking at the end of the meetings if everybody agrees with the discussion and conclusions of the committee and if they allow you, as academic advisor, to sign on their behalf.
- Note, in the case where a student fails a committee meeting we must have everybody's signature including the student's. In such a situation, please tell everyone to sign the report and that if they have problems, to email the Division directly to say that they agree with the report.
- Explain to the student, briefly, the conclusions of the committee meeting

Encourage committee members to be honest – to speak up if they are uncomfortable with something – to be honest if a student is not succeeding. It is not helpful to the student or the supervisor to encourage mediocrity. It is better for a student to fail early on and understand right away that changes are necessary than to be dragged along with unsatisfactory progress and fail after several years invested in the program.

After the meeting:

- Write up the minutes of the meeting
- In a timely manner, send minutes & tracking forms to committee members, the student, and the Division
- If you have signed on behalf of the committee, state in the e-mail that everybody agreed with the decision and that you are signing on everybody's behalf.

General things to be aware of:

- Time limitations & Fast tracking – and their deadlines
- Differences in oral comprehensive structure and requirements
- Regular committee meetings should run from 1h to 2h & the oral comprehensive should be more formal and last longer – reserve a 3h block of time
- Students should be encouraged to talk to academic advisor or Division if there are any questions/concerns
- If a student gets an Overall Unsatisfactory report, a follow-up progress tracking meeting, not sooner than 4 months after the first meeting and not later than 6 months after the first meeting must take place. The same rules apply for a comprehensive examination.
- Failure to meet overall objectives on two Reports (not necessarily successive) constitutes unsatisfactory progress towards the degree and, if recommended by the academic unit, the student will be withdrawn from the University. The same rules apply for a comprehensive examination.
- Some students may benefit from McGill student mental health services
- Marylin, Chen and Sandra know all the details and are supremely helpful