



Supervision Basics

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<https://www.mcgill.ca/gradsupervision/>

Land Acknowledgement

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous peoples whose presence marks this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.





Webinar Objectives

At this session you will have the opportunity to:

- Identify strategies for clarifying expectations with your supervisor
- Learn about the resources available on the topic of supervision

Graduate Supervision at McGill: 3 Strategies for success

1. Know your roles and responsibilities
2. Clarify and re -clarify expectations
3. Know where to go for help (if in doubt, talk to your GPD)

So you have a supervisor...



What role does a supervisor play?

journey rewarding work inspiring experience
mentoring
coaching responsibility collaborating
teaching training advising
guiding
investment directing supporting
learning relationship motivating helping



1. Know your roles and responsibilities

Supervisee Responsibilities

- Propose thesis topics
- Submit work on time
- Prepare for meetings
- Stay in communication between meetings

Supervisor Responsibilities

- Help select & refine thesis topic
- Provide timely feedback
- Meet regularly
- Stay in communication between meetings



Case Study #1

It's the middle of the summer, and you're having a hard time reaching your supervisor. You need your supervisor's signature on a form to pursue an opportunity, you've emailed them about it, and it's been three weeks now with no answer.

What's the best way to remind your supervisor about your request?

Clarifying expectations



2. Clarify expectations with your supervisor

Explicit expectations: rules in the Handbook, McGill policies, program requirements

Implicit expectations: unspoken rules that benefit from explicit discussion with your supervisor





Clarify expectations with an LOU

[Letter of Understanding \(LOU\)](#)

- A Letter of Understanding ensures you and your supervisor:
 - discuss expectations at the start
 - write down the specifics so that you can return to them
- Many departments have program-specific templates online

Which topics does an LOU typically cover?

Most LOUs seek to clarify how you and your supervisor will work together

- How often will you we meet?
- How will you communicate between meetings?
- How quickly can you expect feedback on written work?
- What responsibilities will you have as a researcher within a team?
- What support will your supervisor provide when it comes to publishing, attending conferences, or professional development?
- How will your contributions be credited (e.g. authorship)?

LOUs are a two -way conversation –don't be afraid to ask questions



Case Study #2

You're spending the weekend offline with your friends. When you check your email on Monday, you see that your supervisor emailed you Saturday night with a minor, time-sensitive question about a project, then emailed you again on Sunday to say "never mind". You're not sure how to interpret the tone of the messages, or whether you should change how often you check email in the future.

How would you go about clarifying expectations with your supervisor?

Where to go for help



Student Services
Services aux étudiants

Who can I talk to about supervision?

If you're unsure, the best person to talk to is usually your Graduate Program Director

Advice & Resources

Office of the Ombudsperson

can listen and help you advocate for yourself

PGSS Committee for Member Support

- student volunteers can listen and advise

Dean of Students can listen and direct you to resources

Office for Mediation and Reporting

can listen and address issues of harassment, discrimination, or sexual violence

To Resolve a Conflict

Start inside your Department

Supervisor



GPD – Graduate Program Director



Department Chair

Outside your Department

Faculty Associate Dean

| GPS Associate Dean

| GPS Dean

Mentorship

Supervisory Committee

McGill Peer Support Centre and Peer Support Programs



Case Study #3

At the start of term, your supervisor asked their postdoc to train you on how to use sensitive lab equipment. The busy postdoc only has time for a quick intro session. When you ask questions, the postdoc replies “That’s a good question – you should ask Supervisor.”

When you bring questions to your supervisor, your very busy supervisor replies “That’s a good question! Have you asked Postdoc? You should ask them.”

You don’t want to get the postdoc in trouble or feel like you’re bothering your supervisor, but you’re frustrated that no one is answering your questions.

**What might be going on?
How can you address the problem?**

Graduate Supervision at McGill: Remember the 3 Strategies for success

1. Know your roles and responsibilities
2. Clarify and re -clarify expectations
3. Know where to go for help (if in doubt, talk to your GPD)

The skills you develop in building a productive relationship with your supervisor are transferrable



McGill

Student Services
Services aux étudiants

Supervision Resources

GPS Supervision Website:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/gradsupervision/>

McGill Student Handbook:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/>

SKILLSETS:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/skillsets/>

(join a [supervision workshop](#))

Other grad student resources:

[Graphos](#) [CL&E](#) [Wellness Hub](#)

[CAPS](#) [PGSS](#)

Questions

