

Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS)
 Recommendations on graduate and postdoctoral supervision
 12 November 2013

Background: In December 2012 and January 2013, following significant consultation with faculty (including MAUT), staff, and graduate students, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) together with the Post-Graduate Students' Society (PGSS) distributed a 41-question confidential survey and invited responses from all thesis students and supervisors at McGill. Of the 1,545 professors in supervisory relationships who received this survey, 424 responded (27%). A parallel survey (with similar questions) went to 4,930 graduate student supervisees, and 1,647 students responded (33%). From the results of these surveys, GPS formulated several recommendations. GPS then formed a working group to reconsider the recommendations in the context of incentives (e.g., merit) and disincentives (e.g., workload) related to supervision, meeting on 18 June and 15 August 2013. The resulting changes were brought to two meetings of the Council of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (16 September and 15 October 2013) and then to a consultation with the Provost, the Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning), the Dean of GPS, and the Secretary-General of PGSS on 6 November 2013, with revisions at every step.

The Recommendations:

- Supervision is an academic duty of professors at McGill.
- Supervision involves responsibilities on the part of both the supervisor and supervisee.
- Academic units must evaluate each faculty member's graduate supervision, both quantitatively and qualitatively:
 - i. Quantitative measures: e.g., meeting deadlines (as indicated in progress tracking reports, for example), times to completion of degrees, frequency of committee meetings, successful fellowship applications, graduations, etc.
 - ii. Qualitative measures: e.g., the chair's estimation, statements from others on a supervisory committee, a self-assessment, an external examiner's report on the quality of a dissertation written by a supervisor's student, etc.
- Academic units must offer incentives to promote effective supervision (e.g., merit, course release, awards).
- Each thesis student must be assigned a supervisory committee consisting of at least one faculty member in addition to the supervisor (or co-supervisors); each academic unit will decide the constitution of this committee.
- Professors who have not engaged in graduate supervision at McGill are required to participate in a "Supervisory Orientation" (created with the Faculties and delivered by GPS and TLS) before assuming a supervisory role, (in partial fulfillment of the Ombudsperson's 2010-2011 recommendations). Professors who have not supervised for 5 or more years must meet with their chairs to discuss the benefits of participating in the aforementioned orientation; the chair will determine if the orientation is necessary.
- Mandatory progress tracking (i.e., the process of meeting about, recording, and monitoring progress towards the degree) will be made more efficient through simpler GPS webforms.
 - i. Such progress tracking must be an occasion for the student to meet with at least one additional professor mentoring his/her progress (e.g., the supervisory committee) together with the supervisor(s);
 - ii. Within three months of the student's enrolment in the graduate program a mutually agreed-upon written record of expectations for the supervisory relationship (including, for example, workload, research goals, planned absences, frequency of meetings, timelines for return of

work, support, etc.) must be created. (The revised GPS webform will provide an opportunity for recording this agreement.)