



Regulations on Graduate Student Supervision

1. Principles
 - 1.1. Supervision is a recognized aspect of the academic duty of teaching.
 - 1.2. Supervision involves responsibilities on the part of both the supervisor and supervisee.

2. Supervisors and Supervisory Committees
 - 2.1. Although procedures and timeframes for choosing supervisors and supervisory committees may vary across programs, they must be consistent within a particular program and must be made clear to students. Units should consider the availability of student support, research facilities, space, and availability of potential supervisors in determining the number of students admitted into the program.
 - 2.2. Graduate supervision is recognized as an integral part of the academic responsibility of professors in academic units where supervision is the normal practice, and must be considered in the allocation of workload, as should the teaching of graduate courses.
 - 2.3. Thesis supervisors must be chosen from full-time tenure-track or tenured academic staff, or **ranked contract academic staff** who have research as part of their duties. Supervisors should have competence in the student's proposed area of research. **Professors who retire or resign from the University cannot act as sole supervisors but may serve as co-supervisors, with the unit's and GPS's consent.**
 - 2.4. Emeritus Professors may not act as sole supervisors but may serve as co-supervisors, with the unit's and GPS's consent.
 - 2.5. **Adjunct Professors may not act as sole supervisors but may serve as co-supervisors, with the unit's and GPS's approval. After approval, a letter of agreement, signed by the co-supervisor and the supervisee, must be submitted to GPS. If problems arise, the McGill supervisor will be held accountable to McGill policies and regulations.**
 - 2.6. The academic unit must ensure continuity of appropriate supervision when a student is separated from a supervisor – for example, when the supervisor is on sabbatical, leaves McGill, or retires.
 - 2.7. PhD students must have a supervisory committee consisting of at least one faculty member in addition to the supervisor(s). The supervisory committee must provide, on a regular basis, guidance and constructive feedback on the student's research ([Graduate Student Research Progress Tracking](#)).
 - 2.8. **GPS strongly recommends that all parties engaged in supervisory roles sign a letter of agreement with each supervisee.**
 - 2.9. The Chair of the academic unit should ensure that procedures are in place to address serious disagreements that may arise, for example, between a student and a supervisor or between a supervisor and committee members. Such procedures should involve a neutral mediator, such as the Graduate Program Director, who will ensure that all sides of a dispute are heard before any decision is made. If the issue cannot be resolved at the unit level, then an Associate Dean from Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies should be contacted.

3. Orientation
 - 3.1. Supervisees: Graduate students must participate, before registration, in a mandatory online orientation that includes sections on supervisee responsibilities.
 - 3.2. Supervisors: Professors who have not yet engaged in graduate supervision at McGill are required to participate in a supervisory orientation approved by GPS ~~before assuming a supervisory role.~~ Professors who have not supervised for 5 or more years must meet with their chairs to determine if such orientation is necessary.

Policies and Guidelines on Graduate Student Advising and Supervision

Policies

1. Principles

- 1.1. Supervision is a recognized aspect of the academic duty of teaching.
- 1.2. Supervision involves responsibilities on the part of both the supervisor and supervisee.

2. Practices in Academic Units

- 2.1. Each academic unit should have explicitly stated policies and procedures regarding the advising and supervising of graduate students, as well as established means for informing students of procedures and deadlines relating to the graduate program (e.g., orientation sessions, handbooks) and mechanisms for addressing complaints. Academic units should ensure that their policies and procedures are consistent with the [Charter of Students' Rights](#).
- 2.2. Although procedures and timeframes for choosing supervisors and supervisory committees may vary across programs, they should be consistent within a particular program and should be made clear to students.

3. Supervisors and Supervisory Committees

- 3.1. Thesis supervisors must be chosen from full-time tenure-track or tenured academic staff or contract academic staff who have research as part of their duties. Supervisors should have competence in the student's proposed area of research. Emeritus Professors may not act as sole supervisors but may serve as co-supervisors, with the unit's and GPS's consent.
- 3.2. The academic unit must ensure continuity of appropriate supervision when a student is separated from a supervisor—for example, when the supervisor is on sabbatical, leaves McGill, or retires, or when the student is off campus on field work or takes a job before submitting a thesis.
- 3.3. In addition to a supervisor, Ph.D. students shall have a supervisory committee consisting of at least one faculty member. The supervisory committee shall provide, on a regular basis, guidance and constructive feedback on the student's research.

4. Orientation

- 4.1. Supervisees: Graduate students must participate, before registration, in a mandatory online orientation that includes sections on supervisee responsibilities.

This 4 page document of policies and guidelines has been revised into two parts. One on regulations and the other on responsibilities.

The document titled "Regulations on Graduate Student Supervision" (CGPS.15.21-GradStudSupervision) will describe the Principles, Supervisor and Supervisory Committees and Orientation. The information in red has been added and requires approval (e-calendar).

The document titled: "Responsibilities of the Academic Unit" will describe best practices and will be housed on our Website.

4.2. Supervisors: Professors who have not yet engaged in graduate supervision at McGill are required to participate in a supervisory orientation approved by GPS before assuming a supervisory role. Professors who have not supervised for 5 or more years must meet with their chairs to determine if such orientation is necessary.

5. Progress towards the Degree

5.1. Every unit shall establish clear procedures by which students receive guidance and feedback on a regular basis on their progress through the program as well as on their research (e.g., regular meetings and/or email communication with supervisors and committees, attendance at research seminars, regular reviews of student progress).

5.2. At least annually, there shall be a meeting between the student, the supervisor, and a member of the supervisory committee or a departmental representative, at which objectives for the upcoming year are established and the prior year's progress recorded and evaluated. A written record of such meetings must include the signature of the student, the supervisor, and the supervisory committee member/departmental representative. This record must be retained in the student's departmental file. In the case where the student does not make satisfactory progress, the supervisor(s) and (if applicable) the supervisory committee shall meet at least once per semester for the subsequent twelve months to review progress and, if appropriate, set new objectives. On the occasion of a second unsatisfactory progress report, the student will be withdrawn from the University.

Guidelines

1. Assignment of Advisers

1.1. Each unit should designate a member (or members) of the academic staff to monitor and advise the progress of students through the graduate program.

2. Program Requirements

2.1. Early in their program, students should be informed of the phases through which they must pass toward the achievement of the graduate degree, the approximate amount of time each phase should take, the criteria for successful completion, and any deadlines relating to these phases.

2.2. Students should be made aware of whatever courses are required to complete their programs. Such courses should relate to the student's proposed area of research or to the development of related areas of scholarship.

2.3. Where relevant, students should also be informed of language requirements or comprehensive examinations. The guidelines, criteria, and procedures for comprehensive examinations must be explicit and consistently applied in each program.

2.4. Every effort should be made to ensure that students choose realistic and appropriate areas of research, commensurate with degree requirements.

3. Student Support

3.1. Students should be made aware of sources of financial support (e.g., fellowships; teaching or research assistantships) and of the facilities available to them (e.g., study space, computers).

3.2. Students should receive guidance and encouragement in areas relating to their growth in scholarship, professional development, and career planning. Examples may include, where appropriate: reporting on research; writing abstracts; preparing papers for conference presentation or for publication; writing grant and fellowship applications; conducting a job search; and preparing for job interviews.

3.3. Units should be sensitive to special academic needs and concerns that may arise in the case of certain students, such as international students or students who undertake graduate studies after a long absence from university.

4. Responsibilities

4.1. Graduate supervision should be recognized as an integral part of the academic responsibility of professors in academic units where supervision is the normal practice, and should be considered in the allocation of workload, as should the teaching of graduate courses.

4.2. Units should clearly identify the student's advisory or supervisory needs at each phase and the means by which these needs will be met. Some functions will be fulfilled by the Chair, some by the Graduate Program Director, some by the supervisor, and some by the supervisory committee. Units should clearly identify the specific responsibilities of each of these people, as well as the responsibilities of students themselves.

4.3. Units should consider the availability of student support, research facilities, space, and availability of potential supervisors in determining the number of students admitted into the program.

4.4. Some examples of the responsibilities of the Graduate Program Director are: to be knowledgeable about program requirements, the composition of committees, the procedures for comprehensive and oral defense examinations, and other policies relating to graduate studies; to ensure that all conditions of admission and other requirements are fulfilled; to maintain a dossier on each student's progress; and to be sensitive to graduation deadlines and students' career plans.

4.5. Some examples of the responsibilities of supervisors are to uphold and transmit the highest professional standards of research and scholarship; to provide guidance in all phases of the student's research; to meet with their students regularly; to provide prompt feedback when work is submitted; and to clarify expectations regarding collaborative work, authorship, publication, and conference presentations.

4.6. Some examples of the responsibilities of students are to inform themselves of program requirements and deadlines; to work within these deadlines; to communicate

regularly with the supervisor and committee; and to submit progress reports to the supervisor and committee.

4.7. The Chair of the unit should ensure that procedures are in place to address serious disagreements that may arise, for example, between a student and a supervisor or between a supervisor and committee members. Such procedures should involve a neutral mediator, such as an Associate Dean from Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, who will ensure that all sides of a dispute are heard before any decision is made.

5. **Quality of Supervision and Teaching**

5.1. Academic units and Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies should consider ways to assess and improve the quality of supervision and to help new supervisors. Procedures for monitoring the quality of graduate student supervision and for providing constructive feedback for supervisors should be developed.

5.2. Academic units should establish criteria of excellence in supervision and graduate teaching appropriate to their disciplines and should suitably reward those who meet these criteria, e.g., in decisions concerning tenure and promotion, or merit awards.

5.3. The maximum number of students under the direction of a single supervisor should be consistent with the ability of the supervisor to provide quality supervision, taking into account the workload of the supervisor and norms of the discipline.

Revised by Council of FGSR, April 23, 1999; Revised October 6, 2003, and September 15, 2014



Responsibilities of the Academic Unit

1. Each academic unit should have explicitly stated policies and procedures regarding the advising and supervising of graduate students, as well as established means for informing students of procedures and deadlines relating to the graduate program (e.g. orientation sessions, handbooks) and mechanisms for addressing complaints. Academic units should ensure that their policies and procedures are consistent with the Charter of Students' Rights.
2. Early in their programs, students must be informed of the degree requirements, the amount of time each requirement should take, the criteria for successful completion of the requirements and their deadlines.
3. Academic units must ensure that students are aware of the courses that are required to complete their degrees. Where relevant, academic units must inform students of language requirements or comprehensive examinations. The guidelines, criteria and procedures for these requirements must be explicit and consistently applied in each program.
4. Every effort should be taken to ensure that students choose realistic and appropriate areas of research, commensurate with degree requirements.
5. Students should be made aware of sources of financial support (e.g., fellowships, teaching or research assistantships) and of the facilities available to them (e.g., study space, computers).
6. Students should receive guidance and encouragement in areas relating to their growth in scholarship, professional development and career planning. Examples may include, where appropriate, reporting on research, writing abstracts, preparing papers for conference presentation or for publication, writing grant and fellowship applications, conducting a job search, and preparing for job interviews.
7. Academic units should be sensitive to special academic needs and concerns that may arise in the case of certain students, such as international students, or students who undertake graduate studies after a long absence from university.
8. Academic units and Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies should consider ways to assess and improve the quality of supervision and to help new supervisors. Procedures for monitoring the quality of graduate student supervision and for providing constructive feedback for supervisors should be developed.
9. Academic units should establish criteria of excellence in supervision and graduate teaching appropriate to their disciplines and should suitably reward those who meet these criteria, e.g., in decisions concerning tenure and promotion, or merit awards.
10. The maximum number of students under the direction of a single supervisor should be consistent with the ability of the supervisor to provide quality supervision, taking into account the workload of the supervisor and norms of the discipline.