**Letter of Understanding for Graduate Students and Supervisors**

**McGill Department of Linguistics**

**Last updated January 2020**

This Letter of Understanding is designed to promote an open dialogue between graduate students and supervisors to enhance their awareness of the responsibilities and expectations in research supervision in order to achieve a positive and mutually beneficial student-supervisor relationship.

The letter is structured as follows: **Part I** outlines the standard terms about research supervision, and **Part II** includes some suggestions for negotiable terms that should be discussed between the student and the supervisor(s) whenever a new supervisory relationship is started (e.g. when forming an Eval committee). The letter can be revisited and amended as needed. The letter must be signed by the student and the supervisor(s). Upon the signature, the student will be provided with a copy of the letter, which will become part of the student’s official record.

**PART I**

Both students and supervisors have rights and responsibilities that are assigned by the Department of Linguistics and the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) office at McGill University. Please see www.mcgill.ca/gradsupervision.

1. **Communication**

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| **Students** | **Supervisors** |
| 1. Meet regularly with the supervisor.  2. Monitor and use the official McGill email address for official correspondence  3. Discuss with the supervisor before submitting any conference abstracts, papers, funding applications etc. Give the supervisor enough time to read and revise drafts of these submissions (discuss with supervisor how much time is needed).  4. Regularly access and read [the University regulations and resources web pages](https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2018-2019/university_regulations_and_resources).  5. Provide supervisor, GPD and administrators with permanent and current contact information. Advise supervisor of any absences.  6. Reach out to the GPD early in case of problems or conflicts within the supervisory relationship. | 1. Meet regularly with the student to provide guidance, assess progress and assist the student in the goal of completing the program on time.  2. Meet with the student to discuss specific issues including intellectual property and financial support.  3. Respond in a constructive and timely manner with comments/ revisions to drafts of applications, abstracts, or research presentations.  4. Reach out to the GPD early in case of problems or conflicts within the supervisory relationship. |

**2. Academic and Research Progress**

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| **Students** | **Supervisors** |
| 1. Maintain awareness of and adhere to all policies, procedures and deadlines of the study program as outlined in the [McGill GPS](https://mcgill.ca/gps/students) and [Linguistics PhD or MA guidelines](https://www.mcgill.ca/linguistics/graduate/graduate-student-handbook).  2. Take ownership of research projects and primary responsibility for moving them forward including seeking out resources and advising when needed.  3. Develop the necessary technical and professional skills and learning approaches for completion of the program.  4. Work diligently to meet the milestones of the program.  5. Choose courses that have been approved by the department, in consultation with the supervisor and committee.  6. Submit material in a timely manner for evaluation by the supervisor or the advisory committee to receive adequate assessment.  7. Attend classes you are registered for and inform the instructor if you will be missing a class.  8. Attend all departmental colloquia.  9. Attend departmental reading groups, lab meetings, and other events (specifics to be worked out with supervisor). | 1. Provide appropriate mentorship and guidance in all phases of the study program as outlined in the [McGill GPS](https://mcgill.ca/gps/students) and [Linguistics PhD or MA guidelines](https://www.mcgill.ca/linguistics/graduate/graduate-student-handbook).  2. Provide supervision in a way that leaves the student room for autonomy, especially for doctoral students.  3. Be open, honest and fair with the student when academic performance is not meeting expectations, in order to identify potential problems and find a solution.  4. Ensure that the project (e.g. thesis or Eval) is manageable with respect to the program objectives and timeline.  5. Assist the student in developing research interests and help the student modify the program when unforeseeable problems arise.  6. Provide constructive and timely feedback to thesis drafts and other documents submitted by the student in accordance with an agreed-upon schedule. |

**3. Professional and Interpersonal Conduct**

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| **Students** | **Supervisors** |
| 1. Familiarize yourself with the rules laid out in the Department’s Graduate Student Handbook.  2. Explicitly discuss with supervisor expectations and policies concerning authorship of publications (including conference presentations) and issues surrounding copyright and ownership of intellectual property where applicable.  3. Identify all funding sources you may be eligible for and discuss these opportunities with your supervisor(s) well ahead of the application deadline.  4. Apply for scholarships, travel awards or other types of awards that are appropriate to the study program, as discussed with the supervisor.  5. Departmental funding packages are provided in order for students to focus full-time on their training and research. Accordingly, taking on external employment is normally inconsistent with receiving Departmental funding, and requires approval by the Department. If you are considering taking on employment outside the program, discuss this with the supervisor in advance.  6. While considering important decisions, e.g., about the course of study and to define or redirect the thesis project, consult and discuss details with the supervisor well before a decision is (or needs to be) made.  7. If issues arise throughout the program that may impact your progress, such as challenges of integration, learning challenges, funding situation, selection of courses, any difficulty related to the supervision framework and any foreseen prolonged absence, discuss with the supervisor and/or GPD in a timely manner. | 1. Explicitly discuss with student expectations and policies concerning authorship of publications (including conference presentations) and issues surrounding copyright and ownership of intellectual property where applicable.  2. Guide the student in learning to work independently and as a member of a team.  3. Give credit in an appropriate manner to student contributions to scholarly activity, whether presented at professional meetings or through publications.  4. Provide advice to the student on completing applications for external funding and awards.  5. Implement a plan of action to help the student overcome unforeseen difficulties.  6. Maintain good professional and personal relationships with students in the research group and treat all members of the group (and their work) with verbal and intellectual respect.  7. Make arrangements to ensure the continuity of supervision during leaves or extended periods of absence. |

**4. Safety and Ethics**

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| **Students** | **Supervisors** |
| 1. Uphold the academic integrity of the University. Understand what constitutes plagiarism, misconduct and cheating.  2. Comply with all policies on research ethics, confidentiality and procedures governing use of human or animal subjects, including lab-internal standards.  3. Be aware of emergency procedures in the workplace. | 1. Ensure that the student is informed of the best practices for the responsible conduct of research, including lab-specific standards.  2. Ensure that all ethics certifications and training are obtained, and appropriate safety protocols are followed.  3. Make every reasonable effort to ensure that the student’s research environment is safe and adequately supported. |

**PART II**

The following points aim to provide an (incomplete) list of suggested topics for discussion and negotiation between the student and the supervisor(s) to discuss and clarify advisor-specific expectations. It is expected that you will revisit and revise Part II periodically and that this may depend on your research progress.

**Expectations regarding the Supervisor’s Research Environment**

**Operational Expectations:** working hours, frequency of student-supervisor meetings, preferred communication methods/ frequency, frequency of lab/group meetings, data storage and back-up, assistance from and to other personnel / students.

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| [edit as needed]  Expected working hours/hours per week:  Expected amount of vacation time:  When should the student/supervisor be in the office/lab?:  Frequency of meetings:  Preferred communication methods:  How quickly should the student/supervisor respond to email/direct message etc.?:  How much time is expected to make comments on drafts with deadlines:  Supervisor needs at least \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for an abstract.  … at least \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for a funding application.  … at least \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  Student should expect comments for drafts without deadlines :  No more than \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for an evaluation paper  … \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for a manuscript for publication  … \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for a thesis chapter |

**Academic Expectations:** course selection and course load, co-authorship and author order on abstracts or manuscripts, number of conference presentations and manuscript publications, details on data collection (e.g., location(s), funding etc.), attendance at academic activities aside from official requirements of the Graduate Program (e.g. reading groups, colloquia etc.)

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| [edit as needed]  Courses to take beyond required ones:  Shared goals for presentations:  Shared goals for publications:  Funding for data collection:  Expectations on (co)-authorship: |

**Co-Supervisor Expectations (if applicable):** Scheme and roles of co-supervision.

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**I have read and understand the above content.**

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| Trainee Name | Supervisor Name |
| Sign | Sign |
| Date | Date |
| Co-Supervisor Name (if applicable) | Co-Supervisor Name (if applicable) |
| Sign | Sign |
| Date | Date |
| Graduate Program Director |
| Sign |

Date