

Letter of Understanding for Supervisees and Supervisors in the Faculty of Arts

For most graduate students in Arts, writing the dissertation is the most demanding part of the program. Given the pressures and challenges of the process, it is important to enter into and maintain a supervisory relationship that both student and supervisor feel comfortable with, and that enables the student to work as constructively as possible towards his or her deadline.

Expectations of all Supervisees:

1. It is the student's job to stay informed about program requirements and deadlines;
2. Communicate any absences or interruptions in the program and dissertation process;
3. Let the supervisor know of any program or subject changes as the work evolves, including a possible change of supervisors.

Expectations of all Supervisors:

1. Meet with the student regularly and provide supportive guidance and feedback;
2. Return the student's submitted work with constructive comments within a reasonable period of time, such as within three weeks for a chapter-length submission;
3. Provide professional guidance and advice that may extend beyond the scope of the dissertation.

Defining your own work styles and the boundaries of your supervisory relationship:

As every supervisor-student relationship is unique, it is valuable to have a conversation at the start of the dissertation process, so that both are aware of and understand each other's expectations regarding work styles and boundaries of the supervisor-student relationship. Below is a checklist of questions or topics that should be discussed by the student and supervisor in order to foster mutual understanding and agreement about the dissertation process.

How often will meetings take place?

Will you exchange cell phone numbers/text messages?

Will you be in contact on weekends or during vacations?

Will the supervisor assess work outside of the dissertation – like a conference proposal or a CV?

Does the supervisor encourage or discourage “drop in” visits from the student?

Does the supervisor copy-edit the student's writing (i.e. punctuation, spelling, sentence structure) or only respond to the concepts and organization?

Is the student expected to generate and shape the thesis topic more or less independently, or does the supervisor play a role in its conceptualization?

Does the proposed topic or idea have the mutual agreement of the supervisor and student?

This letter confirms that the supervisor and student have met and discussed these questions and issues, and clarified their mutual expectations of the dissertation process.

Signed:

Supervisor Name:

Student Name:

Supervisor Signature:

Student Signature:
