

McGill University Graduate Program in Psychiatry Letter of Understanding for Graduate Education

This letter of understanding (LOU) is designed to promote dialogue between the supervisor(s) and the graduate student, to define their expectations, and to increase awareness of the rights and responsibilities governing the training program and the student-supervisor relationship. Additional resources for supervisees and supervisors can be found at <https://mcgill.ca/gradsupervision/>.

General Responsibilities of the Student

1. Be Aware of and Follow Administrative Requirements

- Maintain awareness of all policies, procedures and deadlines that affect you.
- Keep in touch with your program administrators (Graduate Program Director and Coordinator). Use your official McGill email address for correspondence related to your program of study and registration as a McGill student.
- Maintain your registration throughout the duration of the program, including, if applicable, ensuring that visas and employment authorization documents are kept up to date.
- Adhere to all deadlines and policies regarding program requirements, thesis submission and, if necessary, leaves of absence or withdrawal.
- Respect the requirement that, in order to maintain full-time status, graduate students may not pursue non-thesis-related employment for more than 10 hours per week.

2. Maintain Accessibility and Communication

- Engage in open communication and feedback with your supervisor on all issues, including research design and results, technical difficulties, coursework, program milestones, and any personal concerns affecting degree progress. Collaborate with your supervisor in setting expectations for your progress in the program.
- Meet regularly with your supervisor and Thesis Supervisory Committee (TSC) to report on progress (minimum once per year), and comply with the Research Progress Tracking Policy of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS).
- Be aware of the guidelines for conflict resolution and identify and address problems early.
- Inform the program administrators, in a timely fashion, of any serious difficulties including illness, trouble with course work or other program milestones, and problems with supervision. Supervisory issues could include mismatch of interests, major professional academic disagreements, interpersonal conflicts, or potential conflict of interest situations. If a change in supervisor is warranted, the Program will work to find the student a new supervisor.
- Embrace diversity and address differences. You and your supervisor may differ in a variety of ways. You can learn a great deal from someone else's cultural experiences and perspective, but such differences can also lead to miscommunications or differences in working styles. For resources on addressing these kinds of differences, see <https://mcgill.ca/gradsupervision/supervisees/adapting>.

3. Perform Academically

- Collaborate with your supervisor to select the members of your TSC.
- Prepare a research and coursework plan in consultation with your supervisor as a basis for the program of study, including any proposed fieldwork.
- Give serious consideration and timely response to comments and advice from your supervisor and/or members of the TSC.
- Apply to all appropriate sources of funding and provide adequate notice to your supervisor/administrator regarding required documents etc.
- Work diligently towards your program milestones. Be aware that continuing in the Program requires satisfactory performance in coursework and research. The GPS [failure policy](#) requires that students withdraw from the University upon receiving a second failing grade in any program requirement. This includes a second failed course, a failed supplementary exam, or a second unsatisfactory research progress report.
- Be aware that supervisors have multiple competing responsibilities and are sometimes travelling in different time zones or have limited access to email. As such, students should allow a reasonable amount of time for answers to questions as well as signatures on required documents.

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4. Conduct Research in a Responsible Manner

- Uphold the academic integrity of the University. Understand what constitutes plagiarism, misconduct and cheating.
- Maintain a workplace that is safe, tidy and healthy, and be aware of any emergency procedures.
- Comply with all policies on research ethics and procedures governing use of human participants/samples and animal research.
- Follow good research etiquette. Respect the work and equipment of others, and show tolerance and respect for those who share your facilities. Discuss potential large costs or expenses when planning your research and prior to purchase. Maintain good records of each stage of research, ensuring that records are appropriately stored and that they remain properly archived in the office. Understand that experimental records and materials are the property of the primary investigator although you have a right to retain copies of records related to your thesis.
- Discuss with your supervisor any expectations and policies concerning authorship of publications, and issues surrounding copyright and ownership of intellectual property. Note: your thesis research must be publishable in the public domain, although you may request withholding of it for a period of up to one year.

5. Take Advantage of Opportunities for Professional Development

- Develop professional skills (including presentation, report and grant-writing, CV building, interviewing, and time management) by attending workshops offered through GPS, Teaching and Learning Services, the Faculty of Medicine, and the Graduate Program.
- Attend seminars and colloquia.

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General Responsibilities of the Supervisor(s)

Supervising graduate students is an integral part of a professor/researcher's workload and academic duty. Within the context of the role of supervisor, a professor/researcher's primary task is to guide and inspire students to reach their scholarly/scientific potential.

1. Follow Rules and Regulations

- Be aware of the University and Program's requirements and procedures.
- Monitor the student's progress in achieving the milestones of their degree program. Participate in mandatory progress tracking by holding a documented Thesis Supervisory Committee (TSC) meeting at least once a year. These meetings are meant to ensure that research objectives are clear and that a realistic timeline for meeting them has been agreed upon by both student and supervisor. Any deficiencies should be documented early on and remedial action assigned in consultation with the student's TSC.
- Understand that dismissal of a student from the Program for lack of performance in research can be requested only after the student has received two unsatisfactory research progress reports.

2. Communicate Expectations and Maintain Accessibility

- Maintain open communication with the student on all issues, including expectations and supervisory practices, and be available for regular consultation with the student and the student's TSC. Inform the student of any prolonged absences, including sabbatical leaves, and make satisfactory alternative supervisory arrangements as required.
- In setting time management expectations, be sensitive to the student's coursework. Keep in mind that passing grades are required for students to maintain their good standing in the Program and that sufficient time must therefore be set aside for attending classes, studying, and preparing assignments.
- Outline an appropriate timetable for submitting work for review and providing feedback, taking into account the length of the document and any expected deadlines. In general, it is appropriate to provide written or oral comments to the student within two to four weeks of receiving the submitted material, but the department recognizes that a longer response time may sometimes be needed because of the supervisor's other commitments. The student and supervisor should bear in mind that relying exclusively on oral comments or summaries of discussions can be problematic in the event of conflict.
- Inform the student clearly and in a timely manner when academic performance is not meeting expectations. Work with the student and the TSC to identify problems and find solutions.
- Inform the program administrators (Coordinator or Director) of any serious difficulties that may arise in supervision. These include mismatch of interests, major professional academic disagreements, interpersonal conflicts, or conflicts of interest. If a change in supervisor is warranted, the Program will assist the student in finding a new supervisor.
- Be on alert for and acknowledge any personal difficulties the student is facing, and refer the student to the appropriate University student services for support.
- Advise the graduate student on the standards for quality and style to which theses and papers for publication must conform and the rules and disciplinary convention of authorship.
- Ensure that the graduate student is informed of the best practices for the responsible conduct of research, including respect for academic integrity. Discuss the University's policies governing copyright and intellectual property.
- Discuss any specific expectations concerning authorship of publications, and issues surrounding ownership of intellectual property and disclosure (this may include patents/licenses).
- Embrace diversity and address differences. As a supervisor, you will encounter students from different cultures and backgrounds. It is important to treat every student as an individual, and all students must be treated equally fairly and respectfully, regardless of their cultural origins or background. Supervisors may discuss expectations, identify shared values, and try new approaches to supervision whenever they might be feasible to improve the student-supervisor relationship. More information on cultural sensitivity can be found at <http://www.mcgill.ca/gradsupervision/supervisors/interacting-supervisees/student-diversity>.

3. Support the Student's Research and Professional Development

- Guide the student in the selection and planning of an appropriate research topic. Provide instruction and encouragement regarding the student's research activities and professional development.
- Ensure that the student has information on relevant theories and the methodological and technical skills necessary

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for the research. Help the student select appropriate coursework and ensure that they have access to intellectual resources and research opportunities.

- Encourage the student to disseminate their research results through publications and conference presentations, to participate in the departmental/university seminars and colloquia, and to attend workshops on professional skill development.
- Assist the student with applications for funding. Provide honest and accurate letters of reference and general advice on career development.

4. Provide an Appropriate Research Environment

- Ensure the student is informed of general emergency and safety measures in the workplace and at the University, and obtains training and certification for research with human participants/samples and animal models.
- Maintain a professional relationship with the student. The University does not permit a professor/researcher to supervise any individual with whom they have a personal relationship that may constitute a conflict of interest. Should such an occasion arise, the professor/researcher must resign as supervisor. The Program, in such instances, will assist the student in finding a new supervisor.
- Avoid conflicts of interest in proprietary research. Declare any business relationship with the student or the student's research. A professor /researcher must not supervise a graduate student who is employed in a company in which the professor has an interest.
- Be aware and respectful of reasonable times of completion for the Department's programs (on average 2 years for the MSc and 4-5 years for the PhD). Candidates for master's degrees must complete the degree within 3 years of initial registration. Candidates for doctoral degrees must complete the degree by the end of PhD7.

5. Follow Appropriate Policies for Financial Support

- Ensure to the best of your ability that the student has sufficient funding to cover any operating costs necessary to their thesis research.
- If providing a stipend, make sure you are doing so in accordance with the Program's policies.
- Understand and respect that a [Student Stipend](#) is defined by McGill as an award paid to a student from a professor's/supervisor's research funds which "will assist the student in qualifying for a degree or other scholastic recognition in the field in which the research is being carried on." Related effort may include research collaboration with the supervisor or others, developing techniques and methodologies, or gaining knowledge of scientific or scholarly ideas – as long as the objective is the student's advancement towards education goals for the desired degree. *Student Stipends may not be associated to work-for-pay situations where there are assigned tasks and deliverables.*

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The Following Information has been discussed and included as part of the Letter of Understanding:

As of January 2016, newly admitted graduate students in the Department of Psychiatry must be guaranteed annual stipends, from sources other than personal or family finances. These stipends are intended for student living expenses and tuitions and fees. Stipends may come from the thesis supervisor's grants, from external fellowships and from awards provided by the department.

The minimum stipend amounts and durations are indicated below. Please note that supervisors are free to pay more than these suggested amounts and are strongly encouraged to pay their students until they have met all degree requirements.

MSc: \$17,850 (mandatory for years 1-2)

PhD: \$20,000 (mandatory for years 1-4)

Differential Fee Waiver: In order to offset the cost of international tuition, the department of Psychiatry is committed to providing international students with \$6,000 per full-time term for the first year of the MSc and the first 3 years of the PhD.

Please check and complete as appropriate:

Student: ___ As a graduate student in the program, I have my own studentship from the following source (e.g. CIHR, SSHRC, HBHL, etc.) _____ in the amount of \$ _____ for the period starting on _____ and terminating on _____.

Supervisor: ___ In agreeing to supervise this student, I also agree to provide financial support in the yearly amount of \$ _____ for the period starting on _____ and terminating on _____. [Note: *Should the student receive an internal or external studentship or fellowship during the stipulated time period, I will only be responsible for top-up funds to reach the minimum stipend indicated above.*]

Other Support: The supervisor is responsible for providing access to sufficient resources for the graduate student's research project. The researcher should specify below his/her policy on funding other activities, such as conferences travel and fees.

Academic Preparation: Specify any areas in the graduate student's background preparation (academic knowledge, technical or language skills, etc.) that must be addressed to avoid negative impact on the research performance or course work.

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Expectations Regarding the Supervisor's Research Environment:

Specify operational expectations, including working hours, frequency of the graduate student- supervisor meeting, as well as the Thesis Supervisory Committee (TSC) meetings, group meetings, reports, record keeping, contribution to general duties, and assistance from and to other personnel/students.

Expected attendance at seminars, conferences, etc., aside from official requirements of the Graduate Program.

Policies on authorship specified according to the Departmental Data Ownership, Stewardship and Publication Agreements for Graduate Students.

Policies on review or written work (extent of supervisor's involvement with student's presentations, thesis preparation, timeframe for return of comments, etc.). Specify communication frequency and type.

Other.

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Signing of this Letter of Understanding confirms:

- 1. Compliance with the specific terms of the Letter of Understanding as detailed on pages 5 & 6.**
- 2. Compliance with University Regulations and Guidelines Governing Graduate Students and Supervisors**
 - Rights and responsibilities established under the [Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)
 - *University Regulations and Resources*, as documented in the [e-Calendar](#), including University policies on research ethics, intellectual property, conflict of interest, leaves of absence, and graduate student supervision.
 - Official [University Policies, Procedures and Guidelines](#) (including harassment policy) documented on the website of the University Secretariat.
 - [Unit policies and procedures](#), as documented on the Department of Psychiatry website.
- 3. Compliance with policies and regulations on ethical conduct of research**
 - If the Student is working with human participants or samples, the Supervisor will work with the student to ensure that all ethical certifications and training will be obtained.
- 4. Commitment to regular performance review and completion of progress tracking reports**
 - In compliance with Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies policies (see Graduate Research Progress Tracking) and the Graduate Program of Family Medicine, all Students are required to meet a minimum of once a year with their Supervisor(s) and TSC in order to ensure positive progression of the thesis.

Signatures:

** I am aware of and understand the content of this document including the program milestones and general responsibilities of the graduate student and supervisors as defined by the Graduate Program, and the University as defined by Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.*

Student (Print): _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor (Print): _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Co-Supervisor (Print): _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Note: Please forward a copy of Pages 5-7 to the Graduate Program Coordinator for the Student file. All admitted students must complete this form with their supervisor(s) within 30 days of the official program start.

Graduate Program Director: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____