



School of
Communication Sciences
and Disorders

École des
sciences de la
communication humaine



Letter of Understanding for Graduate Research Trainees and Supervisors

The SCSD welcomes all incoming graduate research students as new members of our team. Our goal is to guide you through a transformation from trainee to independent researcher in your field of interest, while building relationships with a future network of colleagues. This Letter of Understanding is designed to promote an open dialogue between graduate research trainees and supervisors to enhance their awareness of the responsibilities and expectations governing the training program in order to achieve a positive and mutually beneficial trainee-supervisor relationship.

The letter is structured as follows: **Part I** outlines the standard terms to be shared with prospective trainees before admission, and **Part II** includes some suggestions for negotiable terms that should be discussed between the trainee and the supervisor(s) soon after the start of the program, typically within the first month. The letter will be revisited and amended as needed during the annual progress meeting. The letter must be signed by the trainee, the primary supervisor and the co-supervisor (if applicable). Upon the signature, the letter will be saved in the SCSD main office and electronic copies will be sent to supervisors and trainees for their records. The letter will also be uploaded to MyProgress when it becomes available.

The following are points of discussion designed to make this process efficient and productive for both trainees and supervisors. The discussion can be adjusted to the nature of the research in each research laboratory and to complement the directives in the official Letter of Offer.

PART I

Both trainees and supervisors have rights and responsibilities that are assigned by the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders (SCSD) and the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) office at McGill University. Please see www.mcgill.ca/gradsupervision.

	Graduate Research Trainees	Supervisors
Communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet regularly with the supervisor to report on research progress in accordance with an agreed-upon schedule. 2. Monitor and use the official McGill email address for official correspondence related to the study program and as a student at McGill. 3. Give the supervisor enough time to read and revise drafts of applications, reports or research presentations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet regularly with the trainee to provide guidance, assess progress and assist the trainee in the goal of completing the program on time. 2. Meet with the trainee to discuss specific provisions related to the course of study, including publication conventions, intellectual property and financial support.



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Regularly access and read the University regulations and resources web pages. Keep in touch with the supervisor and administrators. Provide them with permanent and current contact information. Advise supervisor of any absences. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Respond in a constructive and timely manner with comments/ revisions to drafts of applications, reports or research presentations.
Academic and Research Progress	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain awareness of and adhere to all policies, procedures and deadlines of the study program as outlined in the McGill GPS and SCSD PhD guidelines. 2. Develop the necessary technical and professional skills and learning approaches for completion of the program. 3. Work diligently to meet the milestones of the program. 4. Enrol in courses that have been approved by the School, in consultation with the supervisor and the advisory committee (if necessary). 5. Submit material in a timely manner for evaluation by the supervisor/advisory committee to receive adequate assessment. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide appropriate mentorship and guidance in all phases of the study program as outlined in the McGill GPS and SCSD PhD guidelines. 2. Provide supervision in a way that leaves the trainee room for autonomy, especially for doctoral trainees. 3. Be open, honest and fair with the trainee when academic performance is not meeting expectations, in order to identify potential problems and find a solution. 4. Ensure that the master's or doctoral thesis project is manageable with respect to the program objectives, the agreed-upon timeline of the project, and residence requirements. 5. Assist the trainee in developing research interests and help the trainee modify the program when unforeseeable problems arise. 6. Provide constructive and timely feedback to thesis drafts and other documents submitted by the trainee in accordance with an agreed-upon schedule.
Professional and Interpersonal Conduct	<p><i>Trainees and supervisors should discuss, very early on, expectations and policies concerning authorship of publications (including conference presentations) and issues surrounding copyright and ownership of intellectual property.</i></p>	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If considering taking on employment outside the program, discuss with the supervisor in advance in order to comply with McGill student stipends guidelines and to clarify potential side effects. 2. While considering important decisions, e.g., about the course of study and to define or redirect the thesis project, consult and 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guide the trainee in learning to work independently and as a member of a team. 2. Give credit in an appropriate manner to trainee contributions to scholarly activity, whether presented at professional meetings or through publications.



	<p>discuss details with the supervisor well before a decision is (or needs to be) made.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 in a timely manner. Recognize that teamwork is an essential skill to be acquired by a new researcher. Some of the lab work will focus on the thesis goals, but some may also be part of a larger team goal that will allow a broader perspective on research planning. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a plan of action to help the trainee overcome unforeseen difficulties. Maintain good professional and personal relationships with trainees in the research group and treat all members of the laboratory (and their work) with verbal and intellectual respect. Make arrangements to ensure the continuity of supervision during leaves or extended periods of absence.
Safety and Ethics	<p><i>Trainee and supervisor must be aware and comply with the McGill guidelines on academic integrity and intellectual property at McGill (Refer to resources found at https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2018-2019/university_regulations_and_resources/graduate/gps_gi_research_patents_postdocs_associates_trainees)</i></p>	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Uphold the academic integrity of the University. Understand what constitutes plagiarism, misconduct and cheating. Comply with all policies on research ethics, confidentiality and procedures governing use of human or animal subjects, including lab-internal standards. Be aware of emergency procedures in the workplace. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the trainee is informed of the best practices for the responsible conduct of research, including lab-specific standards. Ensure that all ethics certifications and training are obtained, and appropriate safety protocols are followed. Make every reasonable effort to ensure that the trainee's research environment is safe and adequately supported.
Publications and Intellectual Property	<p>All intellectual property developed during research done at McGill under federal or provincial grants belongs to McGill and the inventors. Both the trainee and supervisor have responsibilities to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Publish research results in reputable, externally-refereed journals, thereby achieving the goals of creating new knowledge and reporting it to the appropriate community, recognizing that all data may not be publishable in peer-reviewed journals. Discuss authorship conventions to establish clear expectations regarding the authorship process for shared and non-shared authorship, recognizing the importance of first authorship for the trainee. Policies of authorship should be within the norms of the discipline and McGill's Policy on Research Ethics (refer to section 6 at 	



	<p>https://www.mcgill.ca/secretariat/files/secretariat/regulation_on_the_conduct_of_research_2019.pdf.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> In principle, all original records, data and lab books must be retained by the lab. Trainees should make copies of all of their own original data when they leave the lab if they wish, so long as they adhere to all agreements set forth in consent form(s) and ethics approvals connected to the data. Of note, specific policies associated with granting agencies may also be indicated. Maintain appropriate confidentiality concerning research activities, in accordance with existing practices and policies of the discipline. 	
Laboratory Etiquette and Computer Use	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Keep the work and desk space tidy, respect the space of others, and participate in periodic laboratory cleanup. Understand that space and equipment are shared, and that care must be exercised, and problems reported as they arise. Leave laboratory books and primary data with the supervisor (or if signing out, use a pre-determined process). Use laboratory computers for research purposes only (e.g. work-related email, data analysis, literature searches and other forms of scientific communication). Back up study data on regular basis. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an appropriate research environment. Provide a proper data backup procedure. Ensure the trainee has access to, and receives instruction concerning, lab-specific routines, protocols and procedures.
Financial Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify all funding sources you may be eligible for and discuss these opportunities with your supervisor(s) well ahead of the application deadline. Apply for scholarships, travel awards or other types of awards that are appropriate to the study program, as discussed with the supervisor. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the trainee receives the specified funding outlined in the offer of admission, through any combination of internal/external sources and/or payment from research funds. Assist the trainee to take advantage of funding opportunities to attend and present research at local, national and/or international conferences



PART II

The following points aim to provide an (incomplete) list of suggested topics for discussion and negotiation between the trainee and the supervisor(s) to discuss and clarify lab-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 trainee-supervisor meetings, preferred communication methods/ frequency, frequency of lab/group meetings, reports, record keeping, and contribution to general duties, assistance from and to other personnel / trainees.



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Academic Expectations: course selection and course load, opportunities for early co-authorship 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. journal clubs, research seminars, lab rotation/ internship etc.)

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

Other Expectations: policies regarding authorship, vacation time, religious accommodation, funding support to travel, etc. Refer to [McGill Leave of Absence and vacation policy](#).



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General Others:

I have read and understand the above content.

Trainee Name

Supervisor Name

Sign

Sign

Date

Date



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Co-Supervisor Name (if applicable)

Co-Supervisor Name (if applicable)

Sign

Sign

Date

Date

Graduate Program Director

Sign

Date
