

Letter of Understanding for Supervisees and Supervisors – Dept. of Sociology

For most graduate students, 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. To that end, below is an outline of the general expectations for both parties as well as some questions students might ask supervisors to help define a productive working relationship.

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, preferably within three weeks;
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:

After a conversation with the supervisor, we ask that the student write a brief explanation of his or her understanding of the following work habits or expectations or respond to these questions as a checklist.

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 supervisor have “veto power” of a student's proposed topic or idea?

Please add any additional expectations or needs that this list does not cover.

Disclaimer: The Letter of Understanding is a non-binding agreement that should be used as a tool to facilitate conversation between the supervisor and the doctoral student about roles and expectations. Since these expectations change over the course of the PhD, students should discuss these issues throughout the program.

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Please initial and date to confirm that the issues outlined above have been addressed.

Supervisor _____

Student _____

Date _____

****Once initialed, this form should be uploaded to MyProgress.**