Getting the **Supervisory Relationship** Off to a Good Start

A Template to Address Expectations for Graduate Students and their Supervisors

Recommended topics for graduate students and supervisors to discuss together at the beginning of the graduate student's program. If the student is co-supervised, all three parties should complete this document.

Use Acrobat to download and rename this PDF, save it to your local drive. Graduate student and supervisor complete the template together using the fillable text and check boxes (indicate **N/A** for any items not applicable).

Key Resources

You may wish to consult these resources while completing the template.

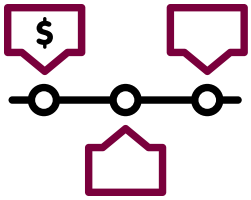
Graduate Calendar and your **Graduate Program Handbook**

Supervision Hub

Resources

Graduate Studies | McMaster University

Created 2016; Revised Dec 2023; Sept 2026



Timelines and Funding

Degree Planning and On-Time Completion

Discuss any financial commitments, funding sources and expectations beyond those specified in the Graduate Calendar and Program Handbook:

Discuss plans for on-time completion, including potential funding implications for in-time, over-time, and out-of-time scenarios:

Holidays and Vacation Scheduling

The Graduate Calendar outlines expectations for holidays, scheduled breaks, and vacation entitlement for students, as well as regulations for other time away from campus.

How should vacation time typically be requested or scheduled?

Research Leave (i.e., Supervisor Sabbatical)

Does the supervisor anticipate a research leave during the student's study period?
☐**Yes** ☐**No** ☐**Unsure** | If a leave will take place during the next year, what is the plan for supervision during the leave?

Health and Safety

If relevant, where would the student find information on health and safety policies and procedures? (e.g., name of the appointed safety officer, operating procedures, etc.)

Teaching or Research Assistantship (Employment)

Does the student have a contract to hold Teaching/Research Assistantships? ☐**Yes** ☐**No** ☐**Unsure**

If a student is paid as a Research Assistant (RA) for the supervisor, how might this arrangement affect the student's own research program (e.g., competing RA vs. program demands on student's time, authorship on publications, etc.):

Voluntary Training Opportunities

Additional opportunities for the student to teach/supervise others might include:

Conferences and Scholarships

Are there opportunities for the student to attend conferences and/or to present scholarly work?
☐**Yes** ☐**No** ☐**It depends**

If so, who will be primarily responsible for searching out such opportunities?☐**Student** ☐**Supervisor** ☐**Both**

Will the student receive funding from the supervisor and/or department for travel related to conference presentations?☐**Yes** ☐**No** ☐**It depends**

Is the student planning or required to apply for scholarships appropriate to their program of study?
☐**Yes** ☐**No** ☐**Maybe**

If so, what role might the supervisor play in the application process?

Meetings and Communication

Supervision

The supervisor and student will arrange and attend regular one-on-one meetings focused on the student's research and/or progress within their graduate program.

The frequency and format of the meetings may vary, but typically meetings will be held:
(e.g., once per week, twice per month, etc.)

Generally, the length of meetings can be expected to be approximately
(duration in minutes or hours).

The primary responsibility for documenting meeting discussions, feedback, action items, and timelines following each meeting will be: ☐**Student** ☐**Supervisor** ☐**Both**

Typically, the supervisor's preferred method of regular communication is (e.g., face-to-face, email, etc.). Indicate preferred method:

How long should the student typically expect to wait for a response from the supervisor for different tasks, e.g., emailed questions, feedback on findings, or manuscript edits? Indicate the typical response time for each type of task:

On average, the supervisor is in their office, lab, or otherwise available to the student:
☐**Daily** ☐**Weekly** ☐ **Monthly** ☐ **Other** (indicate other below)

What are the supervisor's expectations regarding the student's office/lab/on campus attendance?

Supervisory Committee

Who will set up the committee?

What time of year is the annual supervisory committee meeting likely to occur?

What should the student do to prepare for committee meetings?

Other expectations of the supervisor and student regarding forming and interacting with the student's supervisory committee are:

Student Academic, Personal, and Professional Development

What are some of the student's' academic, personal, and professional development goals?

How might the supervisor or committee help?

Research

Ethics

Will the student be conducting research on human or non-human animals (including human tissues or records)? ☐**Yes** ☐**No** ☐**Uncertain**

If so, is the student required to receive ethics approval before data collection can begin?

☐**Yes** ☐**No** ☐**It depends:** Please elaborate for the student if necessary:

Authorship and Publication

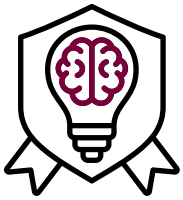
Expectations regarding authorship and publication plans should be discussed openly and revisited throughout the research process. While authorship practices vary across disciplines, students are normally first author on publications arising primarily from their thesis research.

Is the student's work expected to lead to publications?

Is the student considering doing a Sandwich Thesis?

Who prepares the submissions, and how will authorship and author order be determined?

What are the requirements for submissions (i.e., permission from supervisor? Tri-Agency restrictions? open-access journals required?)



Ownership Rights and Intellectual Property

Will the student be involved in research governed by an Industry Sponsored Research Agreement?
☐**Yes** ☐**No** ☐**It depends**

If so, where does the funding come from?

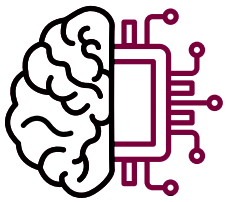
Are there relevant publication restrictions on the student's research such as a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA)? If so, how might this agreement impact the student's thesis (e.g., right of industry or community partner to review student's thesis, or other proposed disclosure, prior to any public presentation of results; embargoed/withheld thesis)?

Is there a possibility that an invention arising from the student's research could be patentable?
☐**Yes** ☐**No** ☐**It depends**

Is the student and/or supervisor interested in commercializing the results of the student's research now or in the future? ☐**Yes** ☐**No** ☐**It depends**

Please elaborate for the student on any other relevant information (i.e., patent, copyright, background IP, Indigenous Data Sovereignty Agreements, commercialization grants, confidentiality, inter-institutional agreements, license agreements):

If concerns exist regarding this topic, consultation with the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) and the McMaster Industry Liaison Office (MILO) is advised.



Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in Research

Undisclosed or unapproved use of GenAI tools to produce, revise, analyze, or interpret scholarly work is considered a breach of academic integrity. Permissible uses may exist but need to be explicitly discussed and approved with the student's supervisor or course instructor, or contained in the course outline.

Discuss expectations and boundaries surrounding the use of GenAI tools in the graduate student's research activities (i.e., permitted/prohibited activities, benefits/risks, current norms)

Are there elements of this student's research activities where use of GenAI tools might be appropriate?

How should the student seek approval for, document, and disclose GenAI use in cases where the supervisor deems it appropriate?

GenAI Resources:

McMaster's Provisional Guidelines on the Use of Generative AI in Research

Acknowledgement

If a student and/or supervisor have questions or concerns regarding any of the topics or agreements discussed in this template, they should discuss the issue together directly for resolution. If questions or concerns persist, they should seek the assistance of their Department/Program Graduate Chair/Advisor or their Associate Dean for Graduate Studies.

We acknowledge our joint intention to re-evaluate this information regularly and modify as needed.

Graduate Student

Name

Department/Faculty

Email

Degree

☐ Master's | ☐ PhD

Program

☐ Check when complete

Supervisor

Name

Department/Faculty

Email

☐ Check when complete

Co-Supervisor (if applicable)

Name

Department/Faculty

Email

☐ Check when complete

Date:

Re-save the completed document and share so that both supervisor and student retain a copy, revisit or revise together as often as needed.