



Setting Expectations: A Resource Guidebook

Productive supervisory relationships promote a thriving university research culture where graduate students are supported to make meaningful contributions to their field of specialization. Setting clear, explicit expectations at the beginning of the relationship, and revisiting throughout, is helpful in establishing open communication, ensuring progress, and avoiding conflict. The School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (SGSPA) has created this document to support the process of expectation setting among graduate students and supervisors across foundational aspects of the supervisory relationship.

How to Use This Guide?

This guidebook is intended to be completed by both the graduate student and the supervisor at the beginning of the graduate student's program and revised when needed.

This guidebook is divided into key sections that are related to different aspects of the supervisory relationship. In each section, you will be guided through questions and prompts to help you set expectations for students' academic and professional growth. After each question, there is space to record your discussion.

This guidebook may contain content that is not relevant to all programs or degree types, in which case, sections can be skipped. At the end of the document, there is an opportunity to plan their learning, research, and professional/career goals. Graduate students are encouraged to discuss these goals with their supervisor, so that their supervisor can provide support and indicate relevant campus resources. The Program Planning Guide can be used to list graduate students' core milestones and requirements and plan the related timelines/dates for completion.

The topics covered in this document are based on the [Graduate Supervision Policy](#), the [School of Graduate Studies Academic Calendar](#), and other relevant Queen's University policies, regulations, and procedures.

This guidebook does not replace official policies and procedures. It is an aid for supporting discussions and is not a legal document; the results recorded in this document are not binding.

4. Who is primarily responsible for organizing meetings? Should meetings have an agenda?

5. Are there any other meetings that the graduate student is expected to attend (e.g., group meetings, project meetings, journal clubs, etc.)?

Key Resources:

- [SGSPA Graduate Supervision Handbook](#)
- [Graduate Supervision Policy](#)

Tip:

- Think about if there are any circumstances that might change your answers to these questions.

4. How is the graduate student expected to respond to feedback?

Key Resources:

- [SGSPA Graduate Supervision Handbook](#)
- [Graduate Supervision Policy](#)
- [University of Waterloo: Receiving and Giving Effective Feedback](#)

Tip:

- Communicate clearly about when turnaround time for feedback may take longer than normal or when submission of work will be delayed.

3. Are there expectations for the graduate student to be present in the office/lab/ on campus?

4. What will happen if the supervisor identifies that the graduate student is not making adequate progress towards degree milestones?

5. How will the graduate student's vacation time be arranged (typically 10 business days in accordance with SGSPA Vacation Guidelines)?

6. Who is responsible for determining the focus of research?

7. What degree of independence should the Graduate student have while conducting their research?

It is expected that a full-time student will limit paid employment unrelated to the student's research to a total of ten hours per week (average); students wishing to exceed this level should consult their supervisor and graduate coordinator.

Key Resources:

- Program Handbooks
- [Student Academic Success Services](#)
- [Queen's Graduate Individual Development Plan](#)

Tip:

- Communicate clearly about when turnaround time for feedback may take longer than normal or when submission of work will be delayed.

Setting Expectations for Supervisory Committee

The primary role of the supervisory committee is to broaden and deepen the graduate student's experience and range of expertise. The supervisory committee assists the supervisor in providing guidance, consultation, and advice on the graduate student's dissertation, thesis, or major research paper. Please refer to your department or program handbook for further information on when to establish your supervisory committee based on your specific graduate program.

1. When is a supervisory committee assembled?

2. How will members of the supervisory committee be selected?

3. Who will contact the faculty members to establish the supervisory committee?

Key Resources:

- Program Handbooks (visit your departmental website)
- [Graduate Supervision Policy](#)
- [SGS Graduate Supervision Handbook](#)

Tip:

- When selecting supervisory committee members, consider their availability to provide feedback and attend meetings, and the value they could add to the research or methodology through their area of expertise.

Setting Expectations for Funding and Scholarships

Graduate students enrolled on a full-time basis in a research degree program and who are within the first 4 years of a Ph.D. program, the first 2 years of a two-year Master's program or the first year of a one-year research Master's program are eligible to receive financial support. The financial package offered to students may

3. If the graduate student exceeds their funding eligible period, how will the graduate student fund the remainder of their graduate degree?

Key Resources:

- [SGS Graduate Supervision Handbook](#)
- [School of Graduate Studies Academic Calendar](#)
- [Queen's Registrar Tuition and Fees](#)
- [Queen's Student Awards](#)

Tip:

- Consider discussing how scholarships and teaching or research positions will contribute or add to the financial package

Setting Expectations for Authorship, Publication & Conferences

The dissemination of research results by publication in scholarly and research journals, by presentation at conferences and seminars and, if appropriate, by protection (patent or copyright) enhances the education and training experience. The norms for research dissemination and the criteria to determine co-authorship and authorship order varies by discipline and should be discussed between the supervisor and the graduate student.

1. What are the disciplinary norms for research dissemination and publication for a graduate student? How frequently should the graduate student attend conferences, publish research, participate in other academic community activities, etc.?

2. Is the graduate student expected to publish independently or with the supervisor? If with the supervisor, how will the authorship order be determined?

3. Will the graduate student be expected to work with other students within the

6. Who will be responsible for finding opportunities for the graduate student to attend conferences and/or to present research work?

7. How will the costs of the conference participation be funded? If partially funded, which costs will the graduate student be responsible for, and which will the supervisor and/or department be responsible for? Are there any restrictions to receiving funding for conference participation (e.g., location, poster vs oral presentation, etc.)?

Key Resources:

- Program Handbooks (please visit your departmental website)
- [Student Academic Success Services](#)
- [Queen's University Library](#)
- [SGS Graduate Supervision Handbook](#)

Tip:

- Consider setting goals and timelines for publications and conference participation then make a plan for achieving these goals



3. Is there potential for a patentable invention to arise from the graduate student's work?

4. Do the graduate student and/or supervisor have interest in commercializing the results from the student's research?

5. Will the graduate student's thesis need to be restricted? ²

6. Are there any expectations for how the graduate student will organize and store their research records and data? ³

Setting Expectations for Health and Safety & Research Ethics

Depending on the nature of the graduate student's research activities, the graduate student may need to complete health and safety and/or research ethics training and approval.

1. Are there any health and safety considerations, resources, or training that the graduate student needs to complete in order to conduct their research?

a. When will the graduate student be expected to complete the required training?

1.

b. How will the supervisor support the graduate student through this process?

Key Resources:

- [Risk and Safety Services](#)
- [Research Ethics](#)

Tip:

- Contact your departmental safety officer for health and safety information specific to your department or lab

Setting Expectations for Conflict Resolution

Issues or conflict can arise through the course of the graduate student's program,

Key Resources:

- [SGSPA Graduate Student Handbook](#)
- [Graduate Supervision Policy](#)

Some advisory supports that the graduate student may wish to contact include: [Queen's Student Wellness: Mental Health & Counselling Services](#), [Queen's Ombudsperson](#), [Four Directions C](#) [nU](#)

Tip:

- When discussing issues or conflict, try to remain calm and objective, separate the person from the problem, and work together to analyze the problem and create a solution. Contact your departmental safety officer for health and safety

Setting Expectations for Accommodations and Academic Consideration

Queen's University is committed to providing accommodation for students with

Key Resources:

- [Queen's Student Accessibility Services](#)

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Setting Expectations for Leaves

The graduate student may take medical, maternity and/or parental leave from their program of study without prejudice to their academic standing. Information and procedures for these leaves can be found in the School of Graduate Studies Academic Calendar.

Additionally, the supervisor may take academic, medical, maternity, and/or parental leave. While it can be difficult to predict if/when a leave may occur, the supervisor may have plans to take an academic leave (i.e., sabbatical).

1. Is the supervisor planning to take academic leave during the graduate student's program?

2. If so, how will the supervisor ensure the continuation of supervision for the graduate student?

3. If the graduate student needs to take a leave during their studies, how should they communicate this to the supervisor?

Key Resources:

- [School of Graduate Studies Academic Calendar](#)
- [Graduate Supervision Policy](#)

Duration

Research Goals

Short-Term

Specific

What are the specific goals?

Measurable

How will you measure their success?

Achievable

How will you achieve them?

Relevant

Why are they relevant?

Timely

When will you achieve them and why are they timely?

Long-Term

Specific

What are the specific goals?

Measurable

How will you measure their success?

Achievable

How will you achieve them?

Relevant

Why are they relevant?

Timely

When will you achieve them and why are they timely?

Duration		Professional/Career Goals
Short-Term	Specific	What are

Program Planning Guide

