

**Department of Psychology
University of Waterloo**

April 2018

The Graduate Research and Supervision Guide

Graduate students play a central role in the Department of Psychology—both in research and in teaching—and the Department is committed to providing all graduate students with an intellectually stimulating, flexible, inclusive, and supportive environment in which to pursue their work. Our graduate programs provide students with the opportunity to develop as scholars with guidance from faculty. Central to this experience is the partnership that is formed with a research supervisor. Though the individual work, communication, and interpersonal styles of students and supervisors vary, the complex interaction between students and supervisors is one that should be based on mutual trust and respect.

What is expected of supervisors?

Supervisors are responsible for fostering the academic development of their supervisees, which includes monitoring their research activities, mentoring them, and advising them on their academic and career path. A supervisor's role is to model integrity in research and academic activities as well as promoting a safe and inclusive working environment. Key to maintaining a healthy student-supervisor relationship is communicating early on the terms of the partnership and the expectations for each other. Supervisors should meet on a regular basis with their supervisees to discuss progress, and should inform students of anticipated extended absences. Supervisors should review written work of their supervisees (e.g., thesis/dissertation/research projects) and provide constructive feedback within a reasonable and clearly communicated timeframe. Supervisors are also expected to provide students with feedback about their general progress in the program on at least an annual basis. It is anticipated that supervisors will encourage students to disseminate their work through various outlets (publications, presentations, etc.) and that the authorship of such activities will be discussed at early stages of the projects.

What is expected of students?

Although provided with the mentorship of a supervisor, graduate students are responsible for their own course of study. The main task of students is to meet the requirements of the Department of Psychology (in their chosen Area of study) in a timely fashion. Students are expected to conduct their research and academic activities with integrity and in an ethical fashion. They are expected to be aware of, and to meet, deadlines (allowing supervisors sufficient time to provide feedback), apply for scholarships, and be knowledgeable of the course requirements for their program. Students are encouraged to communicate regularly with their supervisors regarding their research activities and to inform supervisors of any extended periods of absence. It is important for students to be aware that supervisors have different styles of supervision (including different frequencies for meeting with students and different timelines for providing feedback). Given this variability, students and supervisors are encouraged to discuss the styles of their supervisors at early stages in the working relationship so that expectations are clear.

What students can do if issues arise in the supervisor-student relationship?

1. Discuss the issue with supervisor. In general, the best approach is to keep the line of communication open with supervisors, rather than to avoid the issue (or the supervisor). If a student does not feel comfortable discussing concerns directly with the supervisor (or the issue persists), additional Department and University resources are available to help:
2. Speak with the Department's Associate Chair of Graduate Studies. Notably, with a few specific exceptions, this conversation can be confidential. In this meeting, a plan for addressing the concerns will be *collaboratively* established. The Associate Chair is available to mediate.
3. (If agreed upon, as per above) with the Associate Chair, inform the Chair of the concerns and/or Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.
4. (At any point) Seek guidance from other groups on campus:
 - a. [Graduate Association of Students in Psychology](#)
 - b. [Graduate Student Association](#)
 - c. [Conflict Management & Human Rights](#)
 - d. [Accessibility](#)
 - e. [UW Counselling Services](#)

What faculty can do if issues arise in the supervisor-student relationship?

1. If appropriate, discuss concerns with student. Factors to consider are: Are expectations for the student reasonable? Have expectations been communicated clearly? What resources have been made available to assist the student? Do I need to refer the student elsewhere (see #4 above)?
2. Faculty can consult with the Department's Associate Chair of Graduate Studies, and decisions about how best to handle the issue can be discussed.
3. **Note:** If an issue involves concerns of academic integrity or other UW policy violations, faculty should connect with the Faculty of Arts Associate Dean of Graduate Studies as soon as possible.

Important documents:

[Guide to Graduate Research and Supervision at UW](#)

[Tri-Council Policy Statement](#)

Relevant UW Policies:

[Policy 33: Ethical Behaviour](#)

[Policy 34: Health, Safety & Environment](#)

[Policy 69: Conflict of Interest](#)

[Policy 70: Student Petitions and Grievance](#)

[Policy 71: Student Discipline](#)

[Policy 72: Student Appeals](#)

[Policy 73: Intellectual Property Rights](#)

[Office of Research – guidelines and policies](#)