

# Tips for Graduate Students



## Resolving Things Early

Often when we have problems, there are simple solutions if they are dealt with early on. Dalhousie has a wide range of resources to help. It is important to take the time to build strong connections with other students and faculty in your department. If one day you find yourself in a difficult situation having a strong support network of colleagues can be helpful.

When you have a strong network of peers you can share stories and experiences with, you will realize you are not alone. As a graduate student, the challenges you may be experiencing are not singular and by sharing your experience with others you will come to realize you are not alone and can support one another.

If you don't have a supervisor yet, or if you have questions that your supervisor cannot answer, there are people who can help you and may be able to point you in the right direction.

## Where You Can Reach Out

As a graduate student, you often balance several roles that might be new to you. You are a student, perhaps a Teaching Assistant (TA), researcher or instructor. It is important that you familiarize yourself with some of the general university policies especially if you are a TA or instructor as you may be paid and receive a stipend or paid by external funding or not paid.

Consult the DAL calendar for general policies/procedures and DSAS and DAGS for support.



### Ombudsperson

[OMDBUDS@DAL.CA](mailto:OMDBUDS@DAL.CA)

902-494-2665

Ombudsperson provides confidential, impartial, & independent support and advice.



### Dalhousie Student Advocacy (DSAS)

[DSAS@DAL.CA](mailto:DSAS@DAL.CA)

Advocates provide advocacy & support to help navigate university processes. Advocates can attend meetings with you.

## Where to Find Graduate Regulations

For graduate students, it is important to understand the Dalhousie Academic Calendar is your go-to for general policies and procedures. However, as a graduate student, you will also need to know the departmental specific regulations that govern your program.

Putting it simply, as a graduate student you are in the **Faculty of Graduate Studies** but depending on what department you are in the policies and procedures may differ and you need to be aware of these differences.

Below you will find the link to the Faculty of Graduate Studies academic calendar which outlines university regulations and Faculty of Graduate Studies regulations. The various programs are included in the calendar, and you will be expected to review your program and departmental requirements.

Familiarizing yourself with this information will help you understand the role of the university as well as your rights and responsibilities as a student.

For information on the Faculty of Graduate Studies Academic Calendar visit:  
[FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES ACADEMIC CALENDAR](#)

For information on program specific/department information visit the [Graduate Programs List](#).

## Who To Reach Out To

The earlier you raise your concerns and questions, the greater the likelihood you will be able to resolve an issue(s).

Before taking any steps, take the time to do your homework and review the responsibilities of supervisors and students as listed in **SECTION 9** of the Faculty of Graduate Studies calendar.



**Human Rights & Equity Services**  
[HREHP@DAL.CA](mailto:HREHP@DAL.CA)

902-494-6672

For students seeking advice & support for matters relating to human rights, discrimination, harassment, equity, & inclusion.



**Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students (DAGS)**  
[DGAS@DAL.CA](mailto:DGAS@DAL.CA)

Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students (DAGS) acts as an advocate of graduate students at local, provincial, & national levels.

If you feel comfortable speaking to your instructor/supervisor (by yourself or with support) that would be a great first step. If you do not feel comfortable speaking with your instructor/supervisor, then speak to the Graduate Coordinator from your department/school, and if necessary, the Chair/Director of your department/school.

If a solution cannot be reached, then you may wish to contact the Associate Dean Student/Supervisor Relationships, Dr. Hany El Naggar.



[Faculty of Graduate Studies website](#) is an excellent resource for all Graduate Students

## DID YOU KNOW?

Dalhousie Student Advocacy Service (DSAS) Advocates can attend meetings with your supervisory committee, graduate coordinator, Associate Dean, and any meeting that you have with faculty. These meetings may be informal or formal meetings – you can have support and someone with you to provide support and advice!

DSAS Advocates can support you at any stage throughout your academic experience.

Email [dsas@dal.ca](mailto:dsas@dal.ca) anytime to consult and reach out for support.



## Tips for Building a Relationship with your Supervisor

- \* As a graduate student, you have responsibilities and obligations to know, but you also have rights that are protected by university policy.
- \* Think of your relationship with your supervisor as a partnership and give yourself the tools to keep it healthy; always look for ways to keep the lines of communication open.
- \* Talk to a potential supervisor and to their students before starting to work together; get to know their work in the field and their working style.
- \* Know what your own preferences and needs are in terms of research area, supervision, and feedback; what is your potential supervisor's style? Is that a good fit?
- \* Get to know your departments administrative support staff and treat them with consideration and respect.
- \* Think of your relationship with faculty members, especially those with whom you want to continue to work, as partnerships, and take the initiative to keep these relationships productive.
- \* Early in your relationships within the department, meet in person to establish expectations about progress, feedback, and deadlines. Discuss how you will communicate and how often. It is a good idea not to rely on email. Establish expectations about the subject matter, progress, feedback, and deadlines; clarify what is flexible and what is not.
- \* Discuss how you will communicate. Try to establish regular meetings.
- \* Follow up in-person meetings with an email or written note to confirm and clarify expectations, deadlines, and agreements.
- \* Clear up miscommunication right away, don't let things become bigger problems.
- \* Keep your emails and notes about your meetings.
- \* Make sure you keep in contact and inform your supervisor of circumstances beyond your control that may affect your performance, for example illness or family emergency.
- \* It pays off to resolve things early and constructively!