

ESTABLISHING STUDENT - SUPERVISOR EXPECTATIONS

BACKGROUND

Positive student-supervisory relationships are associated with higher completion rates, faster times to completion and more satisfying experiences for both students and supervisors.

The relationship is more likely to be positive if the expectations of the student and supervisor are established early and adapted and revisited throughout the program.

Below, is a list of topics to discuss with your supervisor/student to help establish your mutual expectations. The topics are neither exhaustive nor are they necessarily applicable to every discipline or relationship. The list should be modified to suit particular circumstances.

Supervisors should aim to create an environment where students feel comfortable to express their expectations.

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Program requirements
- Thesis topic
- Supervisory committee members
- Timelines for major milestones, including time to completion
- Workspace and resource requirements
- Ethics (human/animal) requirements
- Turnaround time for feedback from supervisor on written work (e.g. thesis proposal, grant and scholarship applications, thesis chapters)
- Nature of feedback from supervisor
- Publishing, where and when
- Intellectual property (IP) including authorship on publications, conference presentations, data access
- IP related to industry contacts, thesis publication embargoes, patents
- Research ethics and academic integrity
- Conflict of interest (see Senate policy)
- Expected hours of work, vacation

COMMUNICATION

- Frequency of meetings with supervisor
- Frequency of meetings with supervisory committee
- Preferred methods of communication
- Arrangements during supervisory leaves (e.g. sabbaticals, research trips)

FUNDING

- Value and duration of stipend
- Scholarship and grant applications
- Teaching assistantships
- Research assistantships
- Research-related funding (e.g. conference and research travel)

PROFESSIONAL AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Career plans
- Professional development opportunities (e.g. certificate in university teaching and learning, Mitacs training workshops)
- Conference attendance and presentations (local, national, international)
- Teaching and mentoring junior students

INTERPERSONAL AND WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

- Nature of working relationship (e.g. student - supervisor working and communication styles)
- Cultural differences and expectations
- Response to feedback from supervisor or committee
- Approach to conflict resolution
- Respectful research environment

LABORATORY AND SAFETY (WHERE APPLICABLE)

- Lab rules and protocols
- Safety courses
- Institutional requirements for health and safety