

■ **Resources [#section1f]**

Master's Thesis Supervisory Committees

Composition of Committee

Master's thesis supervisory committees consist of a minimum of two faculty members appointed to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, at least one of whom must be from the program in which the student is enrolled, and who serves as the principal supervisor.

In exceptional circumstances, and with the prior approval of the Dean, one additional member may be appointed who is not a member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Such recommendations are to be accompanied by a brief rationale and an up-to-date curriculum vitae, which should be attached to the

[Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval Form \(.pdf\)](#)

[\[http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/files/2014/06/supervisor-committee-approval.pdf\]](http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/files/2014/06/supervisor-committee-approval.pdf).

Approval Timelines

The membership of each master's thesis supervisory committee, including the Chair, must be recommended by the appropriate graduate program director for approval and appointment by the Dean of Graduate Studies no later than the second term of study (or equivalent for part-time students) or, for students in the Graduate Program in Environmental Studies, by the end of the third term of study.

Approval Process

Recommendation for membership of a master's thesis supervisory committee is formally initiated by the graduate program director via submission of a [Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval Form \(.pdf\)](#) [\[http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/files/2014/06/supervisor-committee-approval.pdf\]](http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/files/2014/06/supervisor-committee-approval.pdf). The Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval Form is to be used when recommending the establishment of a supervisory committee, to add members to an incomplete committee, and to make changes to an existing committee. Final approval of supervisory committee membership recommendations rests with the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Supervisor's Roles and Responsibilities

A thesis supervisor (chair of the supervisory committee) shall:

- be reasonably accessible to the student, normally meeting once a month and never less than once each term; and,
- ensure that a copy of the student's thesis is sent to each member of the student's thesis examining committee as far as possible in advance of the date of the student's oral examination, but no later than three weeks prior to the date set.

Supervisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities

A thesis supervisory committee shall:

- review a student's research proposal and recommend its approval to the appropriate graduate program director and the Dean not less than three months prior to the date set for the oral examination;
- review the student's progress from time to time, normally every six (6) months and never less than once each year. (Reports to the graduate program director of unsatisfactory progress may require a student to withdraw from a program of studies or withdraw from the graduate program in which she/he is enrolled);
- meet annually with the student, normally in the spring, to evaluate the Report on Progress submitted by the student and submit a completed copy of the Report on Progress to the graduate program director after the meeting; and,
- read the thesis and make a recommendation to the graduate program director regarding the oral defense.

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Doctoral Dissertation Supervisory Committees

Composition of Committee

A dissertation supervisory committee will consist of a minimum of three members from the Faculty of Graduate Studies, at least two of whom must be members of the graduate program in which the student is enrolled. The principal supervisor must be a Full Member of the graduate program in which the student is enrolled. An Associate Member of the graduate program may serve as a co-supervisor on the condition that the other co-supervisor is a Full Member of the graduate program.

In exceptional circumstances and with prior approval of the Dean, the third, or an additional member, may be appointed who is not a member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Such recommendations are to be accompanied by a brief rationale and a up-to-date curriculum vitae, which should be attached to the

[Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval Form \(.pdf\)](#)

[\[http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/files/2014/06/supervisor-committee-approval.pdf\]](http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/files/2014/06/supervisor-committee-approval.pdf).

Approval Timelines

For doctoral students to remain in good academic standing, they must have a supervisor and supervisory committee in place in accordance with program requirements. The minimum Faculty of Graduate Studies requirements are as follows: A supervisor must be recommended by the appropriate graduate program director for approval by the Dean of Graduate Studies no later than the end of the fifth term of study (end of second term of PhD II). Students will not be able to register in the seventh term of study (the onset of PhD III)

unless a supervisor has been approved. A supervisory committee must be recommended by the appropriate graduate program director for approval by the Dean of Graduate Studies no later than the end of the eighth term of study (end of second term of PhD III). Students will not be able to register in the tenth term of study (the onset of PhD IV) unless a supervisory committee has been approved.

Approval Process

Recommendation for membership of a doctoral dissertation supervisory committee is formally initiated by the graduate program director via submission of a [Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval Form \(.pdf\)](http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/files/2014/06/supervisor-committee-approval.pdf) [<http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/files/2014/06/supervisor-committee-approval.pdf>]. The Supervisor & Supervisory Committee Approval is to be used when recommending the establishment of a supervisory committee, to add members to an incomplete committee, and to make changes to an existing committee. Final approval of supervisory committee membership recommendations rests with the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Supervisor's Roles and Responsibilities

A dissertation supervisor (Chair of the supervisory committee) shall:

- be reasonably accessible to the student, normally meeting once a month and never less than once each term.
- ensure that a copy of the student's dissertation is sent to each member of the student's dissertation examining committee as far as possible in advance of the date of the student's oral examination, but no later than four weeks prior to the date set.

Supervisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities

A dissertation supervisory committee shall:

- review the student's research proposal and recommend its approval to the appropriate graduate program director and the Dean not less than six months prior to the date set for the oral;
- review the student's progress normally each month and never less than once each term. (Reports to the graduate program director of unsatisfactory progress may require a student to withdraw from a program of studies or withdraw from the graduate program in which the student is enrolled);
- meet annually with the student, normally in the spring, to evaluate the Report on Progress submitted by the student and submit a completed copy of the Report on Progress to the graduate program director after the meeting; and,
- read the dissertation and make a recommendation to the graduate program director regarding the oral defense.

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Graduate Supervision Guidelines

Guidelines for Supervisors

The supervisor's principal task consists in helping students realize their scholarly potential. This can only be accomplished in a relationship that offers insights born of experience, and furnishes the requisite challenges, stimulation, guidance and genuine support. The student has a right to expect from the supervisor expertise, accessibility and support. The supervisor must offer substantive and procedural assistance with the design, planning and conduct of feasible research projects, introduction to the network of scholars in the area of specialization, and support for the presentation and publication of the research results. At the same time the supervisor must ensure that the scholarly standards of the university and the discipline are met in the student's work. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to:

1. Be reasonably accessible to the student for consultation and discussion of the student's academic progress and research problems. The frequency of such meetings will vary according to the discipline involved and the stage and nature of the student's work, but should normally occur once a month, and never less than once each term.
2. Give timely response to submitted written work, with constructive suggestions for improvements.
3. Make satisfactory arrangements with the approval of the director of the graduate program for the supervision of the student when on leave or sabbatical, or on extended absence from the university.
4. Convene an annual meeting of the supervisory committee, normally in the spring, to evaluate the student's Report on Progress, and submit a copy of the completed Report to the Director of the Graduate Program after the meeting.
5. Ensure the student is aware of University, Faculty and program requirements and standards to which the thesis/dissertation is expected to conform.
6. Assist the student with attempts to acquire external funding, including meeting appropriate deadlines, and to engage in scholarly development (e.g., conference presentations and publications).
7. Offer supervision and advice appropriate to the stage of the student's work, helping the student to establish and modify a suitable timetable for completion of the various stages of the thesis/dissertation project:
 - at the proposal stage, assist the student with selection of a suitable and manageable topic and approach.
 - at the research stage, assist the student with initial research design and

subsequent modification, with alleviating current and anticipated problems, with interpretation and analysis of findings, and with bringing the project to completion.

- at the writing stage, assist the student with appropriate and timely feedback on individual draft chapters, and with revision to the draft thesis/dissertation as an integrated whole.
 - at the oral defense stage, advise the student on preparation for the examination and assist the student to interpret and comply with any changes recommended by the examining committee, in conjunction with the Chair of the examining committee as required.
8. When the final draft of the thesis or dissertation is complete, ensure that all members of the committee have read the document and are agreed that it is ready to proceed to an oral defense. Suggest possible members of the examining committee to the program director (i.e., outside examiner, external examiner). Ensure that a master's thesis is sent to the examining committee at least three weeks prior to the date of the examination, and a doctoral dissertation at least four weeks prior to the date of the examination.
 9. Appropriately acknowledge in published material the contributions of the student, including consideration of joint authorship of publications. Where the student's research comprises a component of the supervisor's research program, and joint publication is envisaged, it must be recognized that the responsibility for utilization of data and for publications is held jointly by the supervisor and student. Endeavour to clarify at the outset of the supervisory relationship expectations regarding the responsibility and publication credit for work initiated, designed and researched by the student, but supported financially or otherwise by the supervisor.
 10. Conform to basic principles of academic integrity and professionalism in the development of a mature and objective relationship with the student. It must be recognized that there is a power imbalance in the supervisory relationship and that any form of harassment is unacceptable.
 11. Conform to program and Faculty processes in the event of a supervisory relationship which is unsatisfactory for any reason.
 12. Even though "each student has final responsibility for her or his academic honesty" (Senate Policy on Academic Honesty), it is incumbent on the supervisor to ensure, to the extent that it is practicable in the circumstances, the academic integrity of primary research data, and the consistency with academic integrity and practice of interpretations relating to such data.

Guidelines for Students

By entering into a graduate program, the student has made a commitment to devote the time and energy necessary to engage in research and write a thesis/dissertation which constitutes a substantial and original contribution to knowledge in a field. The supervisor has a right to expect from the student ability, initiative and receptivity. It is the responsibility of the student to:

1. Conform to University, Faculty and program requirements and procedures for completion of the graduate degree, with regard to such matters as research ethics, registration and graduation requirements, thesis/dissertation style and quality standards etc.
2. Develop, in conjunction with the supervisor and supervisory committee, an intended timetable for completion of all stages of the thesis/dissertation, and work to realize that timetable, meeting appropriate deadlines.
3. Meet regularly with the supervisor to review progress. The frequency of such meetings will vary according to the discipline involved and the stage and nature of the student's work, but should normally occur at least once a month and not less than once each term. Interact with other members of the supervisory committee as appropriate.
4. Keep the supervisor and graduate program office informed of where the student may be contacted, and respond appropriately to all communications received.
5. Prepare a Report on Progress for an annual meeting with the supervisory committee.
6. Give serious consideration to and respond to the advice and criticism received from the supervisor and the supervisory committee.
7. Recognize that the supervisor and other members of the supervisory committee may have other teaching, research and service obligations which may preclude immediate responses.
8. Recognize that where the student's research comprises a component of the supervisor's research program, and joint publication is envisaged, the responsibility for utilization of data and for publications is held jointly by the supervisor and student. In such cases, the thesis/dissertation, or draft papers, together with a copy of the raw data, shall be made available to the supervisor prior to submission for publication.
9. Conform to basic principles of academic integrity and professionalism in the development of a mature and objective relationship with the supervisor, the supervisory committee, and other scholars. The entire graduate program, including research and writing of the thesis/dissertation, shall be conducted under the strictest rules of ethics and academic honesty.

10. As stated in the *Senate Policy on Academic Honesty*, “A lack of familiarity with the Senate Policy and Guidelines on Academic Honesty on the part of a student does not constitute a defense against their application.” With that in mind, it is incumbent on each student to ensure the academic integrity of his or her primary research, and of the interpretations relating to such research.

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Annual Progress Reports

It is clearly established that completion rates are enhanced and average completion/withdrawal times reduced if supervisory committees meet regularly (at least annually) with each student, usually in the spring, and evaluate the student’s activities and progress.

Master’s Programs

A thesis supervisory committee shall meet annually with the student, normally in the spring, to evaluate the Report on Progress submitted by the student and submit a completed copy of the Report on Progress to the graduate program director after the meeting. In accordance with program requirements and procedures, students in non-thesis program options may be required to submit a progress report to the graduate program director. Reports to the graduate program director of unsatisfactory progress may require a student to withdraw from a program of studies, or withdraw from the graduate program in which the student is enrolled.

Doctoral Programs

In accordance with program requirements and procedures, students in doctoral programs must submit a progress report to the graduate program director on an annual basis, normally in the spring. Once established, a dissertation supervisory committee shall meet annually with the student, normally in the spring, to evaluate the Report on Progress submitted by the student and submit a completed copy of the Report on Progress to the graduate program director after the meeting. Reports to the graduate program director of unsatisfactory progress may require a student to withdraw from a program of studies, or withdraw from the graduate program in which the student is enrolled.

Sample Progress Report

Graduate programs may use the sample Report on Progress provided below. However, in order to engage more effectively in the annual evaluation and discussion of students’ activities and process, it is strongly recommended that each program develop a report that is more closely aligned with their program-specific requirements, milestones and timelines, and learning objectives.

Name of Student:	
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Program:	
Year Level:	
Supervisory/ Supervisory Committee:	
<i>To Be Completed By Student</i>	
1. What progress have you made toward your degree during the past year? (Do not include progress recorded in last year's report.) Please explain deviations from last year's goals.	
2. Please itemize the remaining requirements for your degree, including stages of your thesis or dissertation, and propose a timetable for completing them, with specific goals for the next year:	
<i>To Be Completed By Supervisor</i>	
1. Comments on the student's progress during the last year:	
2. Comments on the student's objectives for next year:	
3. Comments on student's timetable for completing degree requirements, including thesis or dissertation:	
4. Considering the overall professional development of the student (e.g. stage in program, conference presentations, publications, etc.), is he/she making satisfactory academic progress? If not, explain why.	

5. At least two members of the supervisory committee met with this student to discuss his/her progress *OR* This student is engaged in research away from the university, and unavailable for a meeting, so this evaluation was completed by mail, and discussed by at least two members of the supervisory committee.

Supervisor's
signature:

Date:

Student's Reply To Committee's Comments

Student's
signature:

Date:

A completed copy of this Report is to be forwarded by the supervisor to the program director.

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Conflict Resolution

Each graduate program should make available to students information regarding University, Faculty and program requirements and procedures for completion of the master's or doctoral degree. This information should include the names and areas of expertise of faculty members available for supervision. Furthermore, each graduate program must ensure that the unit provides an atmosphere that is conducive to productivity and creativity, and monitor supervisory relationships within the program.

Each graduate program should have in place a process in the event that supervisory relationships are unsatisfactory for whatever reason, beginning with informal consultation with the program director. In the event that the matter is not resolved at the program-level, consultation with the Office of the Dean, Graduate

Studies would be the next step.

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Resources

- Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, *Guiding Principles for Graduate Student Supervision* [<http://www.cags.ca/documents/publications/working/Guiding%20Principles%20for%20Grad%20rvsn7.pdf>], 2008.
- Council of Graduate Schools, *Research Student and Supervisor*, Washington D.C., 1990
- Ontario Council on Graduate Studies, *Doctoral Graduate Rates in Ontario Universities: A Discussion Paper*, November 1991

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