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# GRADUATE SUPERVISION

**Guidelines for Students, Faculty, and Administrators**

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PREFACE

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This booklet, one of a series prepared by the School of Graduate Studies, is being distributed to graduate students and faculty members throughout the University of Toronto. It is intended to provide graduate students, faculty, and graduate units with guidelines that promote good working relationships between supervisors and graduate students. Nothing could be more important for the University community. Excellence in supervisory practice helps students to fulfil their potential and facilitates everyone's research.

While models of supervision can vary across graduate programs at the University of Toronto, we believe that there are some general guidelines, policies, and suggestions that apply everywhere. These guidelines provide direction on choosing a supervisor, establishing a supervisory committee and maintaining a productive working relationship among all three. Students and faculty can find information in these pages about their respective roles and responsibilities in this important relationship as well as advice on conflict resolution. In Appendix 1 they can also find a checklist that is applicable to their SGS Division. Appendix 2 provides a list of related Web sites.

Many people assisted in the preparation of this document. I would like in particular to thank Umberto De Boni, Associate Dean of SGS Division IV (Life Sciences); Carolyn Johnston, Coordinator of Student Services at SGS; and Jane Freeman, Director of the SGS Office of English Language and Writing Support for directing this project, and for drafting and editing the booklet.

I hope that you will find this booklet useful. Good luck in your research!

Michael R. Marrus  
Dean

September 2002

INTRODUCTION

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Prepared by the School of Graduate Studies, this booklet is intended to assist graduate students, faculty supervisors, and graduate administrators in a critically important part of graduate education: the supervision of students' thesis writing and research. The pages that follow describe best practices in graduate supervision, and set out the rights and responsibilities of both students and their supervisors. We hope these guidelines can assist all participants in the supervisory process to articulate their expectations clearly and thereby to reduce potential problems.

The supervision of graduate students is part of the University's core mandate. The work performed by graduate students forms a vital part of our research effort; good supervisory practices help students fulfill their potential and contribute to the University's research profile. At many universities, the terms of a supervisory relationship are left almost entirely to the discretion of individual graduate students and supervisors. While this approach usually works well, it occasionally proves unsatisfactory. Some students, uncertain about the extent of supervision they should expect, are hesitant to approach their supervisors for help or to make clear their own plans and objectives; some supervisors occasionally neglect to contact their students or to assess work in progress adequately. A lack of clarity between student and supervisor with regard to expectations and responsibilities can adversely affect progress towards the completion of the degree. By providing this document to help clarify expectations and responsibilities, we hope both to reduce conflicts and to facilitate the creative process of thesis research and preparation.

Research degrees at the University of Toronto are offered in many programs, extending across the full range of humanities, social sciences, physical sciences and engineering, and life sciences; therefore, it is not surprising that there exists considerable variation in styles and manners of

supervision. These range from those in which students receive scrutiny and interaction on a continuous basis to those in which students are seen as essentially independent researchers who receive only periodic guidance from supervisors.

Regardless of the model of supervision, there are general guidelines, policies and suggestions that apply to what is considered good supervisory practice. While it is important to acknowledge the leadership role that supervisors play in the relationship with graduate students, it is paramount for graduate students to maintain open channels of communication and to find out for themselves what may be needed for their academic success.

Supervisory checklists for students in each Division of the School of Graduate Studies are included as appendices. Students and supervisors are encouraged to use them as guides to supervisory practices within each Division.

CHOOSING A SUPERVISOR

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## INTRODUCTION

While some graduate units assign a supervisor to a student upon admission to the program, in most graduate units, the responsibility for finding a supervisor rests with the student. The choice of a faculty member who will supervise the thesis work required to fulfill degree requirements is one of the most critical decisions a graduate student will make. A student will spend several years working with the faculty member of choice, and that choice will significantly affect the direction of the student's career. Choosing a supervisor, therefore, is not a decision to be taken lightly. A student undertaking thesis work needs a supervisor who will be not only academically competent in a particular area but also willing to act as the student's advocate when necessary. It is important that the student be able to work and communicate effectively with the supervisor and not feel overwhelmed or intimidated in the relationship. Thesis work can be lonely and isolating (especially in the humanities and social sciences). Each student requires the guidance of someone who will stimulate thought, who has sufficient interest in the student's topic to produce new insights jointly, and who will challenge the student to think in a novel manner about the research.

## OBTAINING INFORMATION ON POTENTIAL SUPERVISORS

In most graduate units, students are responsible for finding their own supervisor. Here is a list of strategies students might use when beginning to look for a supervisor:

**Departmental information.** The departmental Web site or handbook is a valuable source of information on potential supervisors. Many departments have developed Web sites that profile each faculty member, describing the faculty member's area of research, recent publications, and other academic activities. The Graduate Coordinator and administrative staff at the department can also provide valuable advice on potential supervisors and can help students to become familiar with any specific departmental policies on supervision.

**Students may get to know the potential supervisors whose research interests parallel their own** by taking or auditing a course with the potential supervisor, acting as a teaching assistant (if possible), or attending seminars at which the faculty member is speaking. Students may also conduct literature searches to assess potential supervisors' publications and preferred journals.

**Graduate students working with a specific supervisor are an invaluable source of information.** Students who are currently working with a particular supervisor can be asked about their experience with that supervisor and about the supervisor's expectations and working methods. Anyone choosing to work with that faculty member may have close, future interaction with these students, especially in lab-based science programs in which it is common for a supervisor's graduate students to work in close association. While some students may have strong and possibly different opinions on a supervisor, if the general responses are consistent, they should be taken into consideration.

**Students should make an appointment to see potential supervisors.**

Meeting a potential supervisor is an essential step in determining whether a faculty member would be a good fit for a student's area of interests, and for learning about that faculty member's approach to work and study in general. Such a meeting should provide an opportunity to find out significant information about a professor and his or her style. The following is a list of issues that might be covered:

- Have you ever supervised a graduate student before?
- How many graduate students do you supervise? (Students may not want to pick a supervisor that has too many students already.)
- How long does it take a typical student to graduate under your supervision? Or how much time do you expect students to take to complete their theses?
- How will we agree upon my research topic?
- Are there sufficient funds available for the research project?
- What are your expectations regarding funding of your graduate students? Is there a research assistantship available? What will be the sources of my stipend? What is the amount of my stipend? How long will my stipend last? (This information should also be available through the graduate coordinator, since all graduate units now have formal policies for student funding.)
- What level of independence is expected of your graduate students?
- Is there any specific knowledge I need to have before starting to work with you?
- Will I have the opportunity to attend conferences? Publish papers?
- How often do you typically meet with your students?
- Are you planning a sabbatical leave soon? If so, what arrangements for continued supervision will be made during your absence?
- How soon will a supervisory committee be set up and how often will it meet?
- What opportunities would I have in this area of research when I graduate?

- What qualities are you looking for in a person you are supervising?
- Will guidelines be drawn up for working together?

These questions are designed to help the student and the potential supervisor determine whether a good match exists. Where appropriate, the student may also want to ask about the order of authorship on publications and intellectual property issues. In posing such questions, it should be clear that graduate students have the right to own the copyright for their own written or artistic works or computer software and to own the patent rights to inventions they might create, unless they have signed an agreement stating otherwise. Depending on the circumstances, these rights may have to be shared with others – their supervisor, their fellow students, and research staff. This will be determined by the requirements of the law and by University policies.

The choice of a supervisor is a decision to be made with a great deal of care and consideration. Discussion of the topics listed above will also give faculty members a sense of what students expect in terms of meetings, feedback, turn-around time on submitted work, etc. Taking time to explore these issues should result in a productive relationship for both student and supervisor: a relationship that culminates in a piece of original research, completed within a reasonable time period.

## 2

## GRADUATE SUPERVISION AND THE SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

## WORK EXPECTATIONS, PROVISION OF STRUCTURE, AND TIMELINES

The provision of structure by supervisors is crucial at all stages of a graduate student's work, but is particularly important during the initial phase of graduate studies. It is essential that supervisors and students have a shared set of expectations about all aspects of supervision. Each needs to understand the constraints that operate on the other and the effects that these may have on supervision. Good supervisors make their expectations clear to students on issues such as the need for regular meetings, mastery of methodological skills, conference publications and conference presentations, timelines for degree completion, etc. Once these expectations are clearly outlined, it is much easier to develop a positive, productive relationship. The following are suggested topics to cover in initial discussions between student and supervisor:

- Frequency of contact.
- Preferred communication method (e.g., e-mail, voice mail, in person).
- Timelines for each stage of the work.
- Frequency of submission of work (in writing or through presentation).
- Type of feedback expected.
- Whether students work in the department or at home/library.  
Hours of work.
- Nature of any directed reading program.
- Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of progress.
- Additional training, courses, fieldwork requirements.
- Whether publication is expected. When? Whether papers will be presented at conferences. Availability of funding for travel and registration at conferences.

- Intellectual property issues.
- The establishment and membership of the supervisory committee.

## THE SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

The academic experience is greatly enhanced if faculty members other than the direct supervisor are readily and formally available for consultation and discussion with the graduate student. To provide this element of supervision, a thesis supervisory committee or, as an alternative, an area supervisory committee should be in place for all Ph.D. students by the end of the second year of their programs. In some graduate units, supervisory committees are also established for students completing a master's degree. The graduate unit is responsible for monitoring the progress of the student through the supervisory committee, as follows:

- A supervisory committee should consist of the supervisor and at least two graduate faculty members.
- The supervisory committee must meet with the student, as a committee, at least once per year to assess the student's progress in the program and to provide advice on future work.
- The committee submits a written report, at least once per year, detailing its observations of the student's progress and its recommendations.
- The student must be given the opportunity to respond to the committee's report/recommendation and to append a response to the committee's report.
- Copies of the report shall be given to the student and filed with the department.

Members of the supervisory committee should be recorded on the student information system (ROSI). The School of Graduate Studies will monitor compliance with this requirement through ROSI reports and the annual audit of the official student file.

## DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING SKILLS

Writing and research exist in a dialectical relationship. Research prepares students to write; writing enables students to identify gaps in their research. In many fields, future academic success depends directly on an ability to write competitively for research grant support and publication. Since writing facilitates not only the transmission of ideas but also their clarification and evaluation, graduate students are encouraged to write regularly and to submit written work to their supervisors as early as possible. Both the process of writing itself and the feedback provided by supervisors assist students in formulating their research questions and in developing their research plans. If the mastery of writing skills is delayed until thesis writing has begun, there is a risk that some students will find the process of writing so difficult that they either take a very long time to complete the thesis or they will withdraw from the degree program.

The School of Graduate Studies, through its Office of English Language and Writing Support (ELWS), offers numerous courses/workshops/tutorials to assist graduate students who wish to enhance their communication skills. While some courses introduce the specific genres of writing that graduate students produce – such as proposals, conference abstracts, literature reviews, and dissertations – other courses help students to give effective presentations or focus on the specific challenges of oral or written communication faced by non-native speakers of English. Individual appointments with writing instructors complement meetings with thesis supervisors and enable students to develop their research plans and their powers of expression concurrently. It must be noted that ELWS is not an editing service. Students who come for assistance only a week or two before their thesis is due will find their effort has been too little too late.

## 3

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT

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Good supervisory practice entails responsibilities not only of the supervisor but also of the student. When a student enters a doctoral program, that student commits time and energy necessary for research leading to a thesis that makes a substantial and original contribution to knowledge. It is the responsibility of the student to conform to University and program requirements and procedures. Although it is the duty of the supervisor to be reasonably available for consultation, the primary responsibility for keeping in touch rests with the student. The student's responsibilities include the following:

- Becoming familiar with, and adhering to, the rules, policies, and procedures in place in the department, the School of Graduate Studies, and the University as outlined in available resources such as departmental handbooks/Web sites and the SGS Calendar.
- Adhering to all deadlines and policies regarding registration, withdrawal, and thesis submission.
- Preparing a research plan and timetable in consultation with the supervisor as a basis for the program of study, including any proposed fieldwork.
- Meeting with the supervisor when requested and reporting regularly on progress and results.
- Establishing a supervisory committee, with the assistance of the supervisor, by the end of the second year of study. (In some departments, supervisory committees are to be set in place as early as initial registration in the program. For some master's programs, a supervisory committee is also required. Students should check the departmental regulations, which take precedence.)

- Keeping supervisors informed on how they can be contacted and informing them of any significant changes that may affect the progress of the research.
- Acquiring the necessary health and safety skills for undertaking the proposed research and adhering to the ethical practices appropriate to the discipline.
- Maintaining good records of each stage of the research.

## 4

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SUPERVISOR

Within the context of their role as supervisors, a faculty member's primary task is to guide and inspire his or her students to reach their scholarly potential. At the same time, each supervisor must try to ensure that each student is in compliance with the rules and regulations of the University. The supervisor should promote conditions conducive to a student's research and intellectual growth and provide appropriate guidance on the progress of the research and the standards expected. Good supervisory practice includes the following:

- Guiding the student in the selection and planning of an original research topic that can be successfully completed within the expected time frame for the degree program.
- Establishing with the student a realistic timetable for completion of various phases of the program.
- Providing students with realistic times for provision of feedback and ensuring students adhere to the timetable.
- Ensuring that students have an understanding of the relevant theories and the methodological and technical skills necessary for the research, including provision of information through an ethical review process where applicable.
- Establishing with the student a supervisory committee by the end of the second year of the student's program (or earlier as required by the graduate unit), and ensuring that the committee meets with the student at least once a year, as a committee, and provides an annual written report of the student's progress.
- Being accessible to give advice and provide feedback.
- Making arrangements to ensure continuity of supervision during leaves or an extended period of absence.
- Encouraging participation in departmental seminars and colloquia.

- Encouraging and assisting students to attend and present work at local, national, or international conferences and to publish their work in appropriate journals.
- Advising on matters of career options, job market, preparation of the CV, and strategies for launching an academic career.
- Contributing to the student's professional development and funding through letters of reference and general advice.
- Ensuring that the research environment is safe, equitable, and free from harassment and discrimination.
- Avoiding personal or business relationships that may constitute a conflict of interest.
- Being honest with the student when academic performance is not meeting expectations. While dealing with inadequate academic performance can be difficult, it is in no one's best interests to prolong a program of study when success is unlikely.

Students sometimes experience personal difficulties. These can include family difficulties, problems in personal relationships, cultural adjustments, financial pressures, and problems associated with employment. The importance of these various problems should not be under-emphasized. Clearly supervisors are not trained counsellors and cannot be expected to help in a professional sense, nor should they intrude into the personal lives of their students with unwanted advice. However, supervisors should try to ensure that their relationships with students are such that students will be comfortable telling supervisors that they are having significant personal difficulties. Sometimes a timetable can be rearranged or a referral can be made to the appropriate support staff.

## 5

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GRADUATE UNIT

The Chair, the Graduate Coordinator, and the support staff in the department play a key role in the life of graduate students. The department must endeavour to create an environment within which scholarly work by graduate students can flourish, and problems can be resolved in an effective manner. Students should take the time to get to know the departmental administrators. In this way, students can stay current with regulations and departmental activities and events.

Responsibilities of the graduate unit include the following:

- Producing a handbook/brochure/Web site that outlines program requirements, regulations and procedures, financial support and information on faculty members and their area of research/expertise.
- Having procedures in place to facilitate the search for a supervisor and to allow a change in supervisor in the unlikely event that this becomes necessary.
- Establishing an effective communication system with graduate students (i.e., mailboxes and/or e-mail lists) and workspace where possible.
- Providing orientation sessions for both new and continuing students. Information conveyed in these sessions might include: overview of program policies and requirements, areas of faculty expertise for research supervision, expected performance and timelines for completion of degree requirements, intellectual property policies, publication and authorship issues, scholarship/funding information, information on policies regarding the proper conduct of research, sexual harassment, race relations, safety and workplace regulations, and procedures for complaints and appeals.
- Ensuring that the student's supervisory committee meets once a year and that a written report is filed in the official student file at the department.

- Providing a mechanism for resolving problems, which may arise between graduate students, supervisors and/or members of the supervisory committee.
- Establishing a departmental appeals committee to review formal complaints from students.
- Ensuring a safe, equitable and fair working environment for students, and informing them of all relevant safety and work regulations.
- Being sensitive to special academic needs and concerns that may arise for international students, students with disabilities, or mature students with family responsibilities.
- Disbursing departmental scholarship and bursary support in a fair and equitable manner that is consistent with the graduate unit's funding policy.

## 6

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

If a dispute or concern arises between a graduate student and supervisor with respect to the supervisory relationship, the student and supervisor should try first to resolve any difficulties amicably between themselves. If informal discussion does not resolve the problem, there are several avenues to pursue within the graduate department: the supervisory committee, the Graduate Coordinator of the department, and the Chair of the department. If the graduate department is unable to find a satisfactory solution, advice may be sought from the relevant Associate Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. If all else fails, and if the nature of the issue is academic, a student may pursue a formal academic appeal. The process of academic appeal is outlined in the SGS Calendar and also is available on the SGS Web site.

Here are some further considerations related to conflict resolution:

- All conflict is not necessarily to be avoided. Conflict can result in creative solutions and when the conflict involves ideas, it can advance knowledge.
- There is a significant power differential in the student/supervisor relationship, but the very nature of the relationship and the academic enterprise requires that ideas and assumptions may be challenged.
- Expectations should be clear and commonly understood on both sides; put them in writing, if necessary.
- Conflict should be handled early: it is easier to handle smaller issues as they arise, and sometimes options for resolution may diminish over time.
- Not all conflict can be resolved informally. If you have tried your best but you have not resolved the issue, follow the recommended route to a more formal resolution.

## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX I****SUPERVISORY CHECKLISTS**

**Appendix 1 consists of a set of supervisory checklists for graduate supervisors, students, and departments for each of the four SGS Divisions: Humanities, Social Sciences, Physical Sciences and Engineering, and Life Sciences.**

**SUPERVISORY CHECKLISTS****HUMANITIES, SGS DIVISION I****CHECKLIST FOR SUPERVISORS**

A checklist on good supervisory practice might include the following questions:

**Mutual Expectations:**

1. Have you developed an understanding with your doctoral students concerning the mechanics of supervision, the kind and amount of advice you are able and willing to offer, the frequency and regularity with which you expect to see each student, a “plan of campaign” (e.g., the timing of submission of a dissertation outline, of draft chapters), and your mutual expectations concerning the quality and originality of the completed dissertation?

**Definition of Project:**

2. Has the topic of research been refined in the initial stages of work? Is the scope of the dissertation project excessively ambitious? Too narrow? Are you satisfied with the student’s progress and background knowledge of the subject?

**Arrangements for Return of Work:**

3. Do you make and observe clearly stated arrangements for the return of work

within 10-15 business days after it is submitted to you? Under circumstances where this is not possible, do you inform the student of the longer time that will be required to return the material, specifying a different target date?

**Absences from Toronto:**

4. Do you inform your students when you plan to be on research leave or absent for an extended period of time from the University? Have you made satisfactory arrangements for supervision of the student during this time?

**Requirements for Successful Submission:**

5. Is your student aware of University, faculty and program requirements, and standards to which the dissertation is expected to conform?

**Funding and Professional Activities:**

6. Do you support your students in their efforts to acquire external funding, to publish scholarly articles, or to present conference papers?

**CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS**

**It is the responsibility of the student to conform to University and program requirements and procedures with regard to such matters as research ethics, dissertation style, etc. Although it is the duty of the supervisor to be reasonably available for consultation, the primary responsibility for keeping in touch rests with the student. A checklist on how to build a good supervisor/supervisee relationship might include the following questions:**

**Appropriateness of Supervisor:**

1. Have you determined whether the program and area in which you wish to concentrate are staffed by several active faculty members? Before choosing a supervisor, have you consulted the list (available through your department) of faculty research interests and publications? Have you asked students in the program currently working with a prospective supervisor what their experience has been?

**Communications:**

2. Does your supervisor know how to reach you (mail, telephone, other) when you have to go off campus for any significant period of time? Do you respond promptly to all communications received?

**Mutual Understanding:**

3. Have you developed an understanding with your supervisor concerning both the mechanics of supervision and the kind and amount of direction you wish and expect to receive? Are you in agreement about the frequency and regularity with which you plan to see each other and about a “plan of campaign” (choosing a thesis topic, the timing of submission of a dissertation outline, of draft chapters, etc.)? Have you discussed your mutual expectations concerning the quality and originality of the completed dissertation?

**Planning and Consulting:**

4. Have you spent some time in devising a plan for writing the dissertation that can be discussed with your supervisor? (Remember that the dissertation should be largely the student’s unaided effort.) Have you obtained any indication that your research is beginning to yield new and interesting material? Are you meeting regularly with your supervisor to review progress? Do you consult with other members of the advisory committee as appropriate?

**Submission and Return of Work:**

5. Are you presenting your work to your supervisor chapter by chapter (or section by section) in an approved format? The typescript should be legible and, unless you and your supervisor agree otherwise, accompanied by notes. Do you make and observe clearly stated arrangements for the submission and return of your written work?

**Timing:**

6. If you are working towards a deadline, are you allowing sufficient time for your supervisor to read all parts of the thesis in the final form? The responsibility for proofreading the final clean copy is yours, and this reading, too, may take some time.

**Moving Along:**

7. Are you aware that the doctoral dissertation, though important to your career, is the beginning rather than the sum of your academic life, and should be completed without undue delay? In other words, the dissertation should be no longer than necessary.

**CHECKLIST FOR DEPARTMENTS****Information and Obligations:**

1. Do you provide information (in the form of a brochure, handout, document, etc.) to doctoral students and their supervisors that describes the department’s view on good supervisory practice? Does the document spell out both the sorts of help that graduate students have the right to expect and the obligations they in turn owe to their supervisors and advisory committees?

**Providing Appropriate Supervision:**

2. Do you make available to entering doctoral students an up-to-date description of faculty resources, including a list of

instructors' research interests? Does your doctoral program have other ways of effecting a good "match" between a supervisor and the prospective student? Are there procedures in place that allow for a change in supervisor where necessary?

#### **Thesis Proposal:**

3. Is the student required to present to the department a description of the proposed doctoral research that is assessed by people other than the supervisor? Are departmental expectations regarding the length and form of thesis proposals clearly communicated in writing to both students and faculty members?

#### **Departmental Expectations:**

4. Do departmental regulations make clear to both student and supervisor:

- how often student and supervisor might reasonably expect to see each other?
- who has the primary responsibility for keeping in touch?
- how frequently the advisory committee should meet?
- the form in which draft chapters should be submitted to the supervisor (e.g., typed, with notes) and the normal "turn-around" time when both student and supervisor are in Toronto?
- the procedures for reading and examining matters, ranging from acceptable format to such issues as the right and duty of the supervisor to read all parts of the thesis together when they are in final draft form or very close to final form and the duty of the student to proofread the final clean copy that is submitted to the department?

## **SUPERVISORY CHECKLISTS** SOCIAL SCIENCES, SGS DIVISION II

### **CHECKLIST FOR SUPERVISORS**

1. Are your research interests compatible with those of the student seeking your guidance? Are you going to be available for the period of the dissertation? If not, what arrangements have you made? Do you maintain regular contact with your student? Are you accessible and responsive to the student's needs? Are you providing guidance, assessing and supplying constructive responses to material submitted by the student? Do you provide feedback on written submissions within a reasonable time frame?
2. Are you aware of the requirements of the Ph.D. program including course load, comprehensive examinations, thesis proposal, Ph.D. thesis document? Have you developed a suitable timetable with the student for the completion of all the requirements of the Ph.D. program?
3. Have you outlined to the student your expectations of the student at each stage of the Ph.D. program? Have you assisted the student in the selection of a research topic that could feasibly be completed within the timetable of the Ph.D. program?
4. Do you keep records of students' progress and of meetings? Do you meet annually with the other members of the supervisory committee to assess the progress of the student? Do you submit an annual report on the student's progress to the Chair/Graduate Coordinator for inclusion in the student's file?
5. Do you understand that feedback on draft chapters (or parts of chapters) should be provided within an agreed upon time, normally two weeks?

6. Do you arrange for supervision of the student during your sabbaticals or periods of leave from the University? Do you provide forwarding addresses in order for the student to maintain contact?
7. Do you assist the student with applications for research scholarships? Do you encourage your student to present at conferences and to publish material in appropriate refereed academic journals? Have you introduced your student to members of the academic community involved in similar research areas both within and outside the University?
4. Are you maintaining regular contact with your supervisor and members of your supervisory committee? Are they aware of the progress you have made or difficulties you have encountered in your research? Do you submit an annual report on your progress to your committee for inclusion in the departmental files? Does this report list any deviations from your original timetable or research area?
5. Do you make and observe clearly stated arrangements for the submission and return of your own work?

#### CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS

1. Have you selected a research area compatible with the personnel resources of the department? Is your supervisor the most competent person to supervise your research? Is your supervisory committee composed of graduate faculty who are active in your field of research?
2. Do you fully understand the requirements of the Ph.D. program with regard to course load, comprehensive examination, thesis proposal, and thesis document? Are you aware of the expectations of your department/supervisory committee at each of these stages? Have you established a detailed timetable, one that is compatible with normal completion time of a Ph.D. degree? Are you meeting these deadlines?
3. Have you clearly defined your research topic? Are you aware of the possible limitations to your research? Can the research be completed within the timetable of the Ph.D. degree? Will your research make an original contribution to knowledge?
6. Do you submit written drafts of your work at regular intervals for comment by the committee on your work?
7. If you are working towards a deadline, are you allowing sufficient time for your supervisor to read all parts of the thesis in the final form? The responsibility for proofreading the final clean copy is yours, and this reading, too, may take some time.
8. Are you responsive to the demands of your supervisor and supervisory committee?
9. Does your supervisor know how to reach you (mail, telephone, other) when you have to be off campus for any significant period of time? Do you respond promptly to all communications received?
10. Are you making a concerted effort to present your research at conferences and publish material in appropriate refereed academic journals? Are you familiar with the research of leading scholars and aware of current developments in your field of research?

CHECKLIST FOR DEPARTMENTS

1. Does your department produce a student handbook? Does this booklet contain accurate information on graduate faculty, their areas of specialization and absences due to sabbaticals? Does the booklet explain the requirements of the Ph.D. program including information on course load, comprehensive examinations, thesis proposal and the Ph.D. thesis? Is information on the expected and average time for completion of the Ph.D. program included? Is information provided as to the normal timeline for each stage of the degree program? Does the handbook contain updated information on the courses offered by the department? Does it provide guidance on the procedures for making supervisory arrangements and establishing committees? Is accurate information on funding supplied, stressing the level of competition and the restrictions that apply? Is this handbook mailed to all prospective students prior to admission?
2. Is there a detailed document explaining the requirements of each stage of the Ph.D. program? Are the roles and expectation of comprehensive examinations clearly defined? Are the expectations similar in all sections of the department? Is there a precise time frame for the completion of the comprehensive examinations?
3. How are thesis proposals assessed? Is there a formal presentation and defense to a supervisory committee? Is there a departmental document outlining procedures for defining and establishing the expectations of a thesis proposal? Are these procedures standardized within the department? Is there a definite time frame within which the presentation and acceptance of such a thesis proposal must be completed? Are all of these expectations clearly communicated to students in writing?

4. Are the expectations of a Ph.D. thesis clearly defined by the department?
5. How is the progress of a student monitored? Are annual reports of the progress of each student completed and submitted by each supervisor? How are these forms assessed? Is there an annual meeting of the graduate faculty to discuss student progress and possible issues related to supervision/student relationships?
6. Are there adequate procedures in place for students and faculty to discuss problems arising from the supervisory arrangements? Have you a procedure for changing supervisors, if necessary?
7. Are the resources of the department assessed when admitting new students? Are the known research interests of the student compatible with the research interests of a number of active faculty members and in line with the goals of the department?

**SUPERVISORY CHECKLISTS**

**PHYSICAL SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING  
SGS DIVISION III**

CHECKLIST FOR SUPERVISORS

**A checklist on good supervisory practice might include the following questions:**

1. The supervisor/student relationship should be such that the student can see the supervisor whenever difficulties or breakthroughs arise in her or his research. Do the supervisor and the student understand that research progress meetings should be scheduled at regular intervals? It would be helpful if records are kept of the dates of these more formal meetings, the matters discussed, and the research directions agreed upon.

2. Does the supervisor, as part of research training, take steps to ensure that appropriate general experimental practice is correctly followed and that careful and complete records of experimental procedures and results are kept?
3. Does the supervisor understand that adequate feedback on draft chapters (or parts of chapters) should be provided within two weeks or an agreed upon time?
4. Does the supervisor provide opportunities for students to meet leading scholars in the field (for example, by introducing students to seminar speakers) and does the supervisor encourage students to make public presentations of various aspects of their research?
5. Does the supervisor fully understand her or his responsibility to ensure adequate supervision of graduate students during research leaves or other extended absences from the University?
3. Have you, with your supervisor's help, organized a supervisory committee made up of at least three members of the graduate faculty at the University of Toronto (including your supervisor) and does the committee meet at regularly scheduled intervals? Do you prepare and present a report of your progress and an outline of future research directions at these meetings?
4. Are you maintaining exemplary records of your experimental work? It is essential that your records be clear and complete so that others could replicate your experiments recognizing that others may not interpret their results in the same way as you have.
5. Have you developed a clear understanding with your supervisor concerning ownership of intellectual property and the possibilities of co-authored publications and patent applications?
6. Do you regularly consult the departmental brochure and understand all of the elements that are required for completion of the doctoral degree? Do you attempt to establish a timetable for yourself, estimating realistically the time required for experimentation and thesis writing?

#### CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS

**A checklist on how to build a good supervisor/supervisee relationship might include the following questions:**

1. Have you obtained a clear indication that the research topic you are pursuing and the methodology you are using are likely to yield original contributions to knowledge (that is, likely to result in an acceptable doctoral thesis)?
2. Is your literature survey up to date? Do you regularly review the literature in your research areas as it is published?
7. If you are uncertain about your writing skills, are you making a serious effort to remedy this problem throughout your program rather than waiting until you are faced with writing the final document?
8. Do you make yourself available to your supervisor at mutually acceptable times for regular meetings? That is, can your supervisor find you? Do you prefer, for example, working 8 p.m. through until 6 a.m. while your supervisor prefers the more conventional 8 a.m. through 6 p.m. day?

## CHECKLIST FOR DEPARTMENTS

1. Does the student handbook or brochure in your department contain information about the program, its regulations and procedures, financial support, departmental policies on graduate programs, appropriate references to SGS and University policies, and information about faculty members and their research interests? Does it list graduate courses being given that year and does it include course descriptions? For Physical Science departments, are safety regulations and procedures outlined?

Such a brochure should be updated annually and every graduate student registered in the department should be given a copy each September. While it might be helpful to send this brochure to all applicants who receive an offer of admission, the cost may be prohibitive and the information not necessarily helpful for the applicant in decision making. The department's information sheet should certainly be included with every offer of admission.

2. Does the department have procedures in place that make it as easy as possible for a student to find a supervisor that will be a "good match", not only with respect to research interests but also personal attributes that promise a satisfactory working relationship? Are there procedures that allow for a change in supervisors once research is underway? Is it considered acceptable to switch supervisors after the master's degree?
3. Are there clearly defined requirements for the evaluation of student progress (by the end of April each year) by people other than the designated supervisor? For example, is the student's supervisory committee required to meet at least once a year and prior to April 30th?

4. If the department schedules comprehensive examinations, are the objectives of these examinations clearly understood by students and is (are) the examination(s) designed to assess adequately the student's background knowledge?
5. Does the department have a handbook for supervisors of graduate students? Such a handbook could include, *inter alia*, the Endrenyi Report, the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies' publication "Graduate Studies: A Practical Guide" and the booklets "Research Student and Supervisor (An Approach to Good Supervisory Practices)" and the "Role and Nature of the Doctoral Dissertation" published by the Council of Graduate Schools.

## SUPERVISORY CHECKLISTS

## LIFE SCIENCES, SGS DIVISION IV

## CHECKLIST FOR DEPARTMENTS AND SUPERVISORS

1. Is there a student handbook, which contains not only information about the program, research support, joint publications, policies, and living support but also the basic steps that have to be undertaken for completion of the degree, with a clearly stated "normal" time-path?
2. Does the program have procedures in place to achieve a good "match" between a supervisor and prospective student and procedures that allow for a smooth change in supervisor if necessary?
3. Are there clearly defined requirements for the evaluation of student progress (by the end of April each year) by people other than the designated supervisor?

4. How is the topic of the research *refined* during the first two years of study and a critical path laid out for the completion of the research and writing?
  5. Do the supervisor and student understand that regular meetings should be held and appropriate steps taken to keep track of progress?
  6. Does the supervisor understand that feedback on draft chapters (or parts of chapters) should be provided within two weeks or an agreed upon time?
  7. Are appropriate steps taken to keep track of general experimental practices?
  8. Are there opportunities for the student to make public presentations of various aspects of the research and meet with the leading scholars in the area?
  9. Does the supervisor understand that he or she has responsibility to ensure adequate supervision of graduate students during study leaves, sabbaticals, etc.
3. When you get to the thesis definition stage - have you defined clearly the research questions/hypothesis on which you wish to focus?
  4. Do you understand the relevant references and know they contribute to the research that you are undertaking?
  5. Have you developed a clear understanding with your supervisor concerning his or her role as a mentor and the possibilities for co-authored publications that may exist?
  6. Have you obtained a clear indication that the research topic you are pursuing and methodology you are utilizing are likely to yield original contributions to knowledge (i.e., doctoral level material)?
  7. Are you maintaining good records of each stage of the research so that others could, in fact, replicate the work that you are doing (recognizing that they may not have the same interpretations)?
  8. Are you presenting your work section by section in a succinct approved format that can be understood clearly by those active in the field?

#### CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS

Good practice involves not only the supervisor but also the student. Although many of the items in the checklist above apply to all graduate students, there are also a few “good practice” observations that should be directed specifically to doctoral students:

1. Have you selected a program that has a number of faculty active within the field (or area) in which you wish to concentrate?
2. Do you understand all the elements that are required for completion of the doctoral degree, and are you committed to devote the time and energy to fulfill these requirements?

These questions should be reviewed periodically by the doctoral student and supervisor during the course of the program of study and research.

\* This checklist is modified and expanded from that provided in “Research Student and Supervisor” (Washington D.C.: Council of Graduate Schools, 1990). p. 11.

**APPENDIX 2**

**USEFUL WEB SITES**

**Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters**

*<http://www.utoronto.ca/govcncl/pap/policies/behaveac.html>*

**Copyright Policy**

*<http://www.utoronto.ca/govcncl/pap/policies/copyright.html>*

**Endrenyi Report on Ph.D. Supervision**

*<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/current/supervision/report.asp>*

**English Language and Writing Support**

*<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/english/index.htm>*

**Ethical Conduct in Research**

*[http://www.library.utoronto.ca/rir/ethics\\_conduct.html](http://www.library.utoronto.ca/rir/ethics_conduct.html)*

**The Faculty of Medicine Framework for Ethical Conduct of Research and Guidelines to Address Research Misconduct**

*<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/medicine/research/finro/ethics.htm#frame>*

**Intellectual Property Guidelines**

*<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/current/policies/intellproperty.asp>*

**Inventions Policy**

*<http://www.utoronto.ca/govcncl/pap/policies/invent.html>*

**Publication Policy**

*<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/rir/publicat.html>*

**Research and International Relations at the University of Toronto**

*<http://www.rir.utoronto.ca>*

**ROSI Procedures on Recording Supervisory Committees**

*<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/gradadmin/rosi/index.asp>*

**Safety in Field Research, Policy**

*<http://www.utoronto.ca/govcncl/pap/policies/safeifr.html>*

**School of Graduate Studies**

*<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca>*