



## Section 1: Introduction

### How can these guidelines help you?

As one of the most research-intensive universities in the world, the University of Toronto prides itself on providing graduate students with the opportunity for a deep engagement with scholarly work within their given discipline. Most research-stream doctoral students have a requirement to produce original research, complete a written thesis, and defend it at a Final Oral Examination. Similarly, research-stream master's students normally have to write and defend a thesis based on original research. Additionally, a number of professional doctoral and master's programs require that their students be engaged in scholarly activities under the supervision of a faculty member.

**Fundamental to the idea of "supervision" is that a graduate faculty member (or occasionally more than one) takes primary responsibility for assisting a student in learning the science and art of the scientific or scholarly investigative process as well as guiding them through the processes necessary for successful completion of the degree.** In addition, a good supervisor will not only provide research guidance, but also act as a mentor for the student, helping them explore career opportunities, introducing them to the scholarly and professional culture in their discipline, helping them navigate the University, and pointing them to the many resources available at the University to assist students during their program, especially if and when they encounter obstacles that may affect their academic work.

The goal of these best practice guidelines is to assist you in creating a rewarding graduate experience for both your students and yourself.

SGS honours active faculty members who, over at least 15 years, have demonstrated excellence in graduate supervision.

Learn about the [JJ Berry Smith Doctoral Supervision Award](#)

Supervision can take many forms, depending on, for instance, the program the student is enrolled in, the nature of the research or scholarly project, the faculty member's personal supervision style, the student's personal needs and their learning style, the standards of the discipline, and more. **These Guidelines are intended to help supervisors better understand their roles within this process and to ensure that the supervision of graduate students at the University of Toronto is of the highest quality.**

While these guidelines are written primarily for faculty members supervising graduate students in research-stream programs, many of these guidelines can also be applied to those advising students in graduate professional programs. Indeed, **most of the principles underlying best practices in supervision apply to all faculty working with students on scholarly projects.**

In addition to these general guidelines, we recognize that there may also be discipline-specific best practices, and both supervisors and graduate units should identify and adopt those as well.

## Acknowledgements

These guidelines are based on the 2012 publication entitled, "Graduate Supervision: Guidelines for Students, Faculty, and Administrators." The existing guidelines were reviewed and revised by a working group at the School of Graduate Studies (SGS), which involved representatives from across the University, including SGS, the University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union (UTGSU), the Graduate Conflict Resolution Centre, Accessibility Services, First Nations House, and faculty members and students from various disciplines. Additionally, many sections within this document have benefitted significantly from the input and comments obtained from various experts across the University.

A companion publication provides guidelines for graduate students. Together, these guidelines outline the best practices for graduate supervision at the University of Toronto and assist all participants in the supervisory process to have a clear understanding of responsibilities and expectations in order to optimize the graduate experience and prevent potential problems or conflicts.

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## Notes

1. Adapted from School of Graduate Studies, "Graduate Supervision Guidelines: Student Edition," University of Toronto, 2016. Retrieved from: [http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/Documents/Graduate-Supervision-Guidelines\\_Students.pdf](http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/Documents/Graduate-Supervision-Guidelines_Students.pdf), 1.
2. Ibid., 3-4.