Information for New Graduate Supervisors

The supervision of Graduate Students can be one of the most rewarding, and challenging, responsibilities of a faculty member. While each supervisor-student relationship is unique, there are certain practices and procedures that can help ensure this relationship is productive and beneficial for everyone.

Here is some information and resources available for you as you first take on the responsibilities of being a Graduate Supervisor.

What is the overall role of a Graduate Supervisor?

All thesis-based graduate students must have a permanent Supervisor no later than their second annual registration (Graduate Studies Calendar >Handbook of Supervision and Examination>Part II >1.1).

‘The Supervisor should act both as a general academic mentor, with emphasis on guidance, instruction, and encouragement of scholarship and research, and as a judge of the student's performance. Because of their own involvement in research and related professional activities, Supervisors should provide professional guidance and research stimulation to their students. A fundamental duty of the Supervisor is to impart to the student the skills necessary to plan and conduct original research’ (Graduate Studies Calendar >Handbook of Supervision and Examination>Part II>2.3).

How do I obtain supervisory privileges?

The Faculty of Graduate Studies approves the appointment of a faculty member to supervisory status. The Department Head (or Dean in undepartmentalized Faculty) of the faculty member will submit a recommendation form, along with an up to date CV of the proposed supervisor, to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Please communicate with your Department Head to ensure that he/she submits this form, and confirm that he/she has a copy of your CV to submit with it. If the Dean of Graduate Studies approves the recommendation, an Appointment to Supervisory Status letter will be sent to you. For more details, see Granting of Supervisory Privileges.

How can I learn about my responsibilities as a Graduate Supervisor?

The Handbook of Supervision and Examination in the Graduate Studies Calendar contains the rules, guidelines and procedures regarding the appointment of Supervisors and the roles and responsibilities of the Faculty of Graduate
How can I ensure that my graduate student and I have the same understanding of our individual roles and responsibilities?

Supervisors are expected to meet with each of their graduate students when the students begin their programs and complete the Checklist of Expectations for Graduate Student and Supervisor. This checklist outlines the roles and responsibilities of both the supervisor and graduate student.

The checklist may take several meetings to complete, but should be done by the end of the first semester of registration. You and your student each keep a completed copy of the checklist for future reference, and you submit a copy to the student’s Program Director.

How can I improve my skills as a Graduate Supervisor?

The Faculty of Graduate Studies offers workshops, lectures and other events meant to improve the quality of Graduate Supervision across campus. Information on these events can be found on the Faculty of Graduate Studies website. The website also lists other resources to help you improve the quality of your supervision.

Supervisors are welcome to contact the Assistant Dean (Supervisory Development) in the Faculty of Graduate Studies:

Dr. Dave Hansen
e-mail: dhansen@ucalgary.ca
phone: 403.220.2196

Useful Links

1) Handbook of Supervision and Examination
2) Student-Supervisor Checklist
3) Intellectual Property Awareness Checklist
4) Information for Graduate Student Supervisors
5) Tips for writing reference letters
6) Guiding Principles for Graduate Student Supervision from the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS)
7) Nature’s Guide for Mentors