

The FGS Strong Start to Supervision Checklist

Preamble

The aim of the **Strong Start to Supervision Checklist** is to facilitate a strong start to the supervisory relationship through clarification and discussion. It serves to complement the FGS [Discussion Topics to Inform Productive Supervisory Relationships](#). As a shared responsibility between students and their supervisors, effective graduate supervision fosters positive, respectful, and productive relationships that enhance student success.

Graduate students are responsible for their degree completion, requiring independent learning and collaboration with their supervisor. They must engage fully with their studies, meet deadlines, and maintain open communication.

Supervisors are expected to provide mentorship, guidance, and timely feedback on the student's work, including thesis and publication materials.

This checklist helps facilitate open dialogue to clarify roles, preferred styles and programmatic milestones. As a communication tool, the checklist can proactively address potential mismatches in expectations and responsibilities, ensuring both parties understand their roles from the beginning. Regular communication is encouraged, with the checklist serving as a guide for discussing program expectations, working styles, wellness and communication.

While it is essential to commence this checklist at the beginning of the student-supervisor relationship, it should also be revisited periodically to discuss additional items that become relevant, especially during significant changes in circumstances or committee membership.

While organized into four sections, supervisory dyads are invited to discuss items in an order that makes sense at the time. To ensure a smooth relationship, it is recommended that both parties review the **Strong Start to Supervision Checklist** annually, ideally alongside the annual progress report, to keep expectations aligned.

Entering The Supervisory Relationship

The Supervisory Relationship Roles and Responsibilities

We have discussed:

- the purpose of graduate supervision in general and of the supervisor, student and supervisory committee (if applicable).
- the purpose of the supervisory committee including their responsibilities to provide feedback through scheduled supervisory meetings, and expectations regarding contact with individual committee members.
- the FGS Graduate Supervision regulations for [supervisors](#) and [students](#) as well as those listed in the [Ontario Principles for Graduate Supervision](#).
- the shared responsibility of fostering a positive, respectful and appropriate working relationship between student and supervisor.
- the [supervisory committee roles and responsibilities](#) as well as the process to secure additional members to the supervisory committee.

Objectives And Preferred Styles

We have discussed:

- our respective objectives and how we are planning to achieve them, noting how student objectives in particular, may shift over time.
- the student's preferred learning style(s) (e.g. mostly independent, does well with structure, needs feedback/encouragement) and agree to revisit this discussion periodically during check-ins.
- the supervisor's preferred supervisory approaches (e.g. hands-on/hands-off, mentor, manager, organizer) and agree to revisit this discussion topic periodically during check-ins.

Communication

Communication

We have discussed:

- the responsibilities of supervisors and students to maintain timely communication.
- the preferred means of communication (e.g., email, phone, in-person, online) as well as expectations for 'check-ins' by the student regarding progress or requests for scholarly guidance.
- the length of time to expect a response for emailed questions, chapter draft feedback, queries regarding field work and other specifics associated with the student's given program.

Conflict Resolution

We have discussed:

- how conflicts can sometimes arise in the student-supervisor relationship, the [FGS approach to conflict and related supports](#) and the benefits of open, proactive and transparent dialogue with one another aimed at conflict prevention.
- the mechanisms for raising any concerns over supervision or other conflicts that may arise and of the availability of assistance from the Graduate Program Director, and other offices at the university including the Faculty of Graduate Studies Dean's office.

Feedback

We have discussed:

- the teaching and communicative role of feedback on written and creative work (such as thesis or dissertation proposals, scholarship applications,

- proposals, ethics applications, thesis/dissertation chapters, creative works and potential publications) that is expected from the supervisor and supervisory committee where appropriate.
- the reasonable expectation to receive feedback from a supervisor or committee member is normally up to 15 business days depending on the size of the document and timing of submission.
 - a plan to give, receive and respond to feedback on student work that works for us given our preferred supervisory approach and learning style(s).
 - the importance of student responses to feedback including the arrangement of a meeting to discuss any areas requiring further clarity.

Frequency And Format of Meetings

We have discussed:

- the importance of scheduling and attending regular student-supervisor meetings and supervisory committee meetings in order to support the timely completion of the degree.
- and agreed upon a meeting schedule in terms of frequency and format(s); agenda co-creation and the shared responsibility of creating summary notes.
- when and for what purposes the supervisory committee will be met with, including the necessity of individual meetings with committee members and students.

Academic, Progression & Program Requirements

Program Requirements & Progression

We have discussed:

- program-specific requirements, components, timelines and time limits.

- reasonable expectations for student workload and milestone completion, including a discussion of hours devoted to study and other professional development activities.
- agreed upon a meeting schedule and format that will support the timely completion of the degree.
- the importance of the FGS annual progress report including its components, goals, timeline and related supervisory committee meeting requirement.

Academic Conduct, Academic Integrity

We have discussed:

- Academic Integrity issues such as plagiarism, and the misrepresentation of data in presentations, proposals, theses, dissertations, creative works and the consequences of these acts.
- the York University [Academic Conduct Policy and Procedures](#).

Research Expectations, Research Ethics & Research Integrity

We have discussed:

- the necessity of ethics approval before data collection involving humans or animals can begin.
- the role of the supervisor in supporting students to draft and complete research ethics forms prior to submission to the Office of Research Ethics.
- the principles of approaches to [Safeguarding Research](#), Research Integrity in general and specific aspects salient to the given program and intended area of scholarly inquiry.
- expectations regarding research including lab and/or field research.

Funding & Scholarships

We have discussed:

- the student's funding sources, as outlined in the offer letter at the time of admission, including any associated expectations for the student or supervisor.
- the availability of scholarships and awards and of the student and supervisor's roles attached to these opportunities.

Intellectual Property

We have discussed:

- Intellectual Property issues that may arise during the course of graduate studies in general and those related to the particular program and those related to the student/supervisor collaboration where applicable.
- the necessity to review the [FGS regulations on Intellectual Property](#) and the related student-supervisor [Intellectual Property Awareness Checklist](#).

Wellbeing & Professional Development

Academic & Professional Development

We have discussed:

- the necessity to build academic skills related to graduate studies and of the student's responsibility to seek out and avail themselves of opportunities for growth associated with scholarly skills and future career readiness.
- the importance of accessing and acquiring professional development skills and that experiences of this nature add value to the student's future career goals.
- the role of the [Individualized Development Plan \(IDP\)](#) and the importance to revisit aspects of it annually, ideally in conjunction with the Annual Progress Report.

- that the identification of opportunities for the student to attend suitable conferences and present scholarly/creative work is a shared responsibility.
- that while publications and research outputs are of benefit to the student's professional and academic development, we understand that they should not displace or be prioritized ahead of meeting academic milestones.

Well-Being

We have discussed:

- the importance of work-life balance for the graduate student and supervisor and of the availability of [graduate student wellness services](#) from FGS.
- the rights of students and supervisors to take time off, the importance of informing one another of absences and the requirement of the supervisor to arrange coverage of supervisory duties should an absence be extended.
- the shared expectation to co-create safe teaching and learning environments within the academic space and supervisory relationship.

Accommodations

In situations where the student identifies as having a disability, we have discussed:

- the need to register with Student Accessibility Services. We further discussed that once an accommodation plan is provided to the supervisor, a follow up discussion will be arranged to discuss any academic accommodations and to revisit expectations and deadlines.
- the necessity of ongoing communication regarding accommodations during check-ins and supervisory/committee meetings.