

**Department of Educational Psychology  
University of Alberta**

**The Role of PhD Supervisor**

This document is designed to help faculty in the Department of Educational Psychology in the “best practice” of PhD supervision. It should be interpreted as a guide.

**Prior to program commencement**

Help the student to plan his/her coursework

- *Help plan the required courses for the student’s specific program of study*
- *Advise student on suitable optional courses (inside and outside Department)*
- *Expose student to all elements of research training*
- *Expose student to all elements of professional training*
- *Provide student with Area reading list, or otherwise appropriate reading list*
- *Place program of coursework on file in the Graduate Student Office*
- *Consult with student when changes are to be made to the program of coursework and place changes on file*
- *Advise student of FGSR 8-hour ethics requirement*

Work out a time-path with the student to complete the program within the required period

- *When coursework should be completed*
- *When the Candidacy examination should be completed*
- *When the internship (if required) should be completed*
- *When the Final Oral examination should be completed*

**First year of program**

Provide early direction in initial research study formulation and planning

- *Discuss general area of research interest*
- *If appropriate, discuss how the student’s research might fit into supervisor’s program of research*
- *Request a 2-3 page outline of proposed research*
- *Direct student towards relevant literature*
- *Discuss possible courses that might be relevant*
- *Mutually agree upon joint research dissemination (preferably in writing and signed by both student and supervisor)*

Provide regular feedback on the student’s research proposal. Demonstrate interest and enthusiasm in what student is doing

- *Meet with the student at least every two months*
- *Request specific undertakings for each meeting*
- *Discuss various formats for the dissertation (traditional, paper, etc.)*
- *Discuss appropriate research methods (quantitative, qualitative, mixed, etc.)*
- *Discuss how chapters or papers should be organized, etc.*

Return written submissions within the time frame negotiated with the student (usually within two weeks)

- *Provide specific and detailed feedback that can be systematically followed by the student*
- *Recommend other "model" dissertations for student to read*

Provide constructive criticism if the student does not meet professional research standards. Make every effort, in conjunction with the supervisory committee (if constituted), to identify problems early in the program. Provide advice on reformulating the student's goals and plans, if needed.

- *Provide advice on possible courses that need to be taken*
- *Direct to specific faculty members that might be helpful*
- *Advise on background reading and preparation*
- *Advise on how to develop appropriate writing skills, etc.*
- *Consult with Associate Chair, if necessary*

## **Second year and beyond**

Create a three-member Supervisory Committee no later than the end of the student's first year of study

- *Supervisory Committee membership decided by supervisor and student together*
- *Supervisor, not student, should approach other members to be on the committee*
- *Supervisory Committee should be the core of the student's examining committees (Candidacy and Final Oral)*

Call a minimum of one Supervisory Committee meeting each year with a resulting signed document of deliberations and decisions

- *Meeting form available in the Graduate Student Office*
- *Student and members of committee sign form and place on file in Graduate Student Office*
- *A new form should be completed each time the supervisory committee meets*

Help the student prepare for the Candidacy examinations

- *Provide student with reading list and other preparatory information*
- *Explain format and procedures of examinations (tell student to give a copy of their CV to all examining committee members)*
- *Provide mock exams if deemed beneficial*
- *Provide an opportunity for student to present their proposal in front of peers*

- *Supervisor should arrange Candidacy exam with Graduate Records Secretary and contact Candidacy Examining Committee*
- *Supervisor makes all arrangements for the candidacy exam, including refreshments*

Provide continuous advice and support for the student's research study

- *Establish a regular meeting schedule*
- *Ask student to come prepared with an account of what has been accomplished since last meeting*
- *Ensure the ethics approval form has been completed and approved before any research with human participants is undertaken*

Provide critical feedback on the student's dissertation document

Help the student prepare for the Final Oral examination

- *Mutually agree upon an External Examiner for the dissertation*
- *Supervisor contacts the External Examiner (request CV to be sent to Associate Chair including list of doctoral students supervised)*
- *Get Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis form signed by Supervisory Committee*
- *Supervisor gives copy of dissertation to Graduate Records Administrator to send to External Examiner (once FGSR approves the External Examiner)*
- *supervisor makes all arrangements for Final Oral exam, including refreshments*
- *Remind student to prepare and bring CV to the Final Oral exam*

Encourage and support the dissemination of the student's dissertation research

- *See Department document, "Graduate Student Opportunities"*

Provide support for the student's search for post PhD employment

- *Provide extensive and detailed letters of reference*
- *Direct to places advertising employment opportunities (journals, websites, etc.)*
- *Make the occasional phone call*

## **Ongoing**

View the student as a junior research colleague (mentor/apprentice). Create a supportive environment for the student to develop a wide range of research techniques and skills. Involve the student in existing research programs and encourage and provide opportunities for early dissemination of research

- *See Department document, "Graduate Student Opportunities"*

Help the student complete all documentation requirements for the Department of Educational Psychology, the Faculty of Education and FGSR

- *E.g. applications for travel funding, research assistantships, scholarships; research forms, etc.*

Where possible provide support and encouragement in time of research, financial or personal crisis

- *Stay current with research funding availability*
- *Consult with Associate Chair*
- *Contact student if (s)he is absent for an extended period*
- *Continuously monitor the student's progress through the program*

Ensure continuing supervision during any sabbatical leave or leave of absence from the university

- *Inform student early of absences*
- *Provide regular contact via email, telephone, or Skype*
- *If necessary, arrange for an alternate supervisor*

Keep all documentation (emails, letters, forms, notes from meetings/phone calls, notes from Candidacy examinations, etc.) related to the student's program

**Prior to meeting with their supervisor, students should be encouraged to review the document, "Student-Supervisor Relationships" distributed by the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) at the University of Alberta.**