

## Graduate Supervision for New Faculty: The first semester in five easy steps.

Before your first student: How to prepare for graduate supervision at SFU.

- ¥ Read the Graduate General Regulations  
([K W W S Z Z Z V I X F D V W X G H Q W V F D O H Q G D U I D O O I H H V D](#))  
These provide the broad framework for graduate supervision at SFU.
- ¥ Read the attached document from the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies statement of guiding principles of graduate supervision.
- ¥ Read the "SFU Graduate Student Admission Handbook."  
(<http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/dean-gradstudies/currentstudents/SFU-gradhandbook.pdf>)
- ¥ Familiarize yourself with your academic unit's graduate program. What are the requirements of students? Thesis? Extended essays? Projects? How many courses?
- ¥ Speak to your colleagues about what is required of a supervisor in your unit vis-à-vis the requirements for the degree. For example, is the supervisor to be involved in helping the student select courses? Is the supervisor expected to get the extended essay into "defensible" form or just to provide feedback on earlier drafts? What role are supervisors to play in providing funding for graduate students? How is intellectual property handled?
- ¥ Speak to your Graduate Chair about the institutional supports and funding available to students in your unit.
- ¥ Ease your way into supervision by:
  - ! Agreeing to serve on a graduate supervision committee before you agree to supervise your first student
  - ! Agreeing to co-supervise your first student with a more seasoned colleague
  - ! Teach a graduate seminar in your department
  - ! Join your unit's graduate committee to become familiar with the functioning and the culture of graduate studies at SFU.
  - ! Read up on the current debates and trends in graduate education in Canada. The 36 website provides an updated set of links to some of this material.
- ¥ Determine your limits:

- ! What do your colleagues say is the normal number of graduate students that they feel is possible for a faculty member to supervise?
- ! What funding policies exist in your academic unit?
- ! What funding do you have to assist your student?

Selecting your first students:

- ¥ Agree to supervise only those students with a strong academic record and the appropriate academic background and skills for the research they will undertake.
- ¥ Recruit from among your own excellent undergraduate students. You may have taught them in senior level courses, supervised them in a directed study, or sponsored them as an undergraduate research assistant in programs such as the Undergraduate Student Research U G V (USRA) or, when possible, have had them volunteer in your lab or with your research. Build on the strength of the training and rapport you have already developed with these students and continue to train them at the graduate level. There is no longer a stigma associated to students doing a graduate degree where they completed their undergraduate studies.
- ¥ At least for now, do not take risks with students who sound promising but who lack preparation or who have had conflicts with your colleagues.
- ¥ Determine how you will fund your student and do not accept students you cannot fund. Even in disciplines where faculty funding is not the norm, think hard about taking a student who would not qualify for a tri-council fellowship or a graduate fellowship or internal awards.
- ¥ Have an initial discussion of their expectations in terms of their degree and the role you will play in their development as a scholar. Make sure your expectations are compatible.
- ¥ Discuss financial support expectations and be prepared to compete for the best students

Your first meeting with your student(s):

- ¥ Before your first meeting, think about what you expect of your student: how often would you like to meet? What milestones are appropriate in the short term? What are the expectations of your program in terms of courses and milestones? Think about your expectations of yourself as a mentor: what is your preferred means of communication (face-to-face meeting, email, phone, Skype)? How quickly do you think you can have feedback your student on drafts? How much lead time do you need for writing letters of reference? The \* 3 6 expectations document (attached here and website) may help you determine your own expectations of yourself and your student. There are also some good checklists that you like to use during your first meeting with your student to help them articulate their own expectations of themselves and of you (attached here).
- ¥ Communicate your expectations to your student. Again, using the checklist may be helpful.
- ¥ Listen to your student's expectations and come to a mutual agreement.

- ¥ Set milestones together and choose courses where appropriate.
- ¥ Discuss authorship on publications, intellectual property and research assistantship expectations.
- ¥ Take notes during your meeting.
- ¥ Summarize your notes and email them to the student asking for comments or clarification if needed.
- ¥ Set a meeting schedule for the semester and discuss the best means for communication in between meetings.

Staying on the ball:

- ¥ Talk with your Graduate Program Chair and Graduate Program Assistant about upcoming deadlines such as those for Tri-council funding, internal awards or those related to progress through your program.
- ¥ Set aside time to prepare letters of reference as fellowship deadlines approach.
- ¥ Discuss with your student and then choose a supervisory committee for your student depending on the nature of the degree in your unit. It is better form to approach potential committee members yourself rather than ask your student to do so though a potential committee may ask to meet with the student as they decide whether to take them on.
- ¥ Meet and communicate regularly with your student. If you have ~~to~~ <sup>away</sup>, let your student know if they can reach you and how and if not, ~~will~~ <sup>who</sup> act as supervisor in your absence.
- ¥ Review your student(s) ~~Os~~ progress by discussing their work in ~~courses~~ <sup>the lab</sup> or the lab.

*Observe some basic guidelines as you develop your relationship with ~~ty~~ <sup>student</sup>:*

- ¥ Provide timely constructive feedback
- ¥ Use a professional tone in all your interactions and mentor your student to do the same.
- ¥ If your student is working in your lab ensure that they are being paid at the current departmental rate for their level of training and ensure that you are observing statutory holidays and are allowing for adequate vacation time.
- ¥ Be transparent about funding decisions.
- ¥ Encourage the student to participate in the life of your academic unit, your discipline and in professional development opportunities offered by SFU and other agencies (such as MITACS). (see ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> website for more)
- ¥ Accept that the student has many demands on their time and resources.
- ¥ Address difficult issues or disagreements as soon as possible. Avail yourself of the mediation of the Graduate Program Chair where necessary or of the Ombudsperson.
- ¥ Provide a safe and healthy work environment that is free of conflict of interest, and discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, class, ability, religion and sexual preference.