

Anyone involved in a dispute should attempt to resolve the dispute informally by meeting with the parties involved. Attempts to resolve the dispute at the lowest level are strongly recommended.

Who to talk to?

In the event of a conflict in the supervisor-student relationship, the supervisor should discuss the issues with the student and with the graduate coordinator (e.g. Associate Chair) for their department in a timely fashion. Conflicts are often best addressed within the department, with the assistance of the graduate coordinator.

If an issue related to graduate studies cannot be resolved at the department level, it would then be appropriate to involve one of the four Associate Deans at FGSR to attempt a resolution. As much as possible, in-house informal resolutions will be sought. Your Associate Dean at FGSR can be contacted directly by email or by telephone on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The Associate Deans serve on a part-time basis with FGSR, and hold full-time continuing academic appointments in other Faculties. Staff at FGSR have access to their calendars and can make appointments for meetings.

Tips to stay sane

- Be calm, be patient, be clear
- Protect yourself (and your memory) by keeping a record of meetings, deadlines, and events
- Manage expectations by being clear as to your role and your requirements, and by taking action expeditiously
- Seek advice (from experienced colleagues, your department's Associate Chair, or an FGSR Associate Dean)
- Consider including departmental staff and faculty colleagues in the plan for managing a difficult student
- Know when to fold – know when to end the relationship

But do not forget...

It also helps to recognize that a student may be considered “difficult” for a range of reasons, with a range of different strategies and approaches being required to address the problem.

Students may be difficult because they are unwilling to accept, follow, or believe any advice. Others are considered difficult because of a needy or dependent personality. Some students are considered difficult due to anger or hostility, while others may exhibit traits that suggest they are vengeful and “on a mission”.

However, also remember that a difficult student may also be one facing difficult personal circumstances, including depression and mental illness, with resources existing on campus to assist in such situations.

A list of campus resources to assist graduate students has been prepared by the FGSR decanal team and can be found under resources for graduate coordinators.