**Governance Executive Summary**  
**Advice, Discussion, Information Item**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda Title</th>
<th>Faculty of Graduate Studies &amp; Research (FGSR) Graduate Supervisory Initiatives</th>
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**Item**

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<tr>
<th>Action Requested</th>
<th>☐ Approval</th>
<th>☐ Recommendation</th>
<th>X Discussion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Proposed by</td>
<td>Faculty of Graduate Studies &amp; Research</td>
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<td>Presenter(s)</td>
<td>Brooke Milne, Vice-Provost &amp; Dean, FGSR</td>
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**Details**

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<tr>
<th>Office of Administrative Responsibility</th>
<th>Provost &amp; Vice-President (Academic)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Purpose of the Proposal is (please be specific)</td>
<td>The proposal is before the committee to consider three Supervisory initiatives which will build capacity in the Graduate Student experience, support Graduate Student success, and enhance the Graduate Student-Supervisory relationship:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) FGSR Adjunct Academic Appointment and Graduate Student Supervision Policy &amp; Graduate Student Supervision Development Procedure</td>
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<td>(2) Student-Supervisor Guidelines</td>
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<td>(3) Progress Report</td>
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**Executive Summary**  
(outline the specific item – and remember your audience)

Graduate Supervision forms an important component of a faculty member’s teaching/research duties, and it is foundational to graduate student success at the U of A. Graduate students make notable contributions to undergraduate teaching as TAs, and the research they complete as RAs is essential to the university’s mission. The supervisory relationship is the most important relationship that a graduate student will have while at the U of A, and strong, well supported, and positive working conditions directly influence time to completion and the overall student experience (including mental health and wellbeing).

These complementary initiatives will function to address several pivotal components of the supervisory relationship:

(1) The **FGSR Adjunct Academic Appointment and Graduate Student Supervision Policy & the Graduate Student Supervision Development Procedure** formally recognizes the important role supervisors have working with graduate students at the University of Alberta. The FGSR Adjunct Academic Appointment and Graduate Student Supervision Development Procedure embodies shared principles across all faculties wherein we collectively recognize, and work to promote and support best practices resulting in strong graduate student supervision, and constructive working relationships for both students and their supervisors. Part of this includes providing formative development training for new employees and academic colleagues so that they have access to information and resources, and are informed about university policies and procedures that will help them to succeed at the start of their professional academic careers. New employees
For the Meeting of June 7, 2021

Item No.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Supplementary Notes and context</th>
<th>and academic colleagues appointed after the final approval and implementation date will be required to complete the development procedure within their first two years to retain academic adjunct status. All employees and academic colleagues appointed prior to the approval and implementation date will be automatically granted academic adjunct status and are not required to take the development procedure but are able and encouraged to do so. The net goal is to establish and maintain a strong community of practice focused on supporting supervisors and graduate students to be successful in their working relationships and graduate programs.</th>
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</table>
| | [NOTE: This item has been moved to a UAPPOL Policy and related Procedure. While the format is different from the previously circulated documents, the core content remains the same. The Student-Supervisor Guidelines and the Progress report will remain in their current format for inclusion in the U of A Calendar, which is where all regulations related to students and their programs reside. The policy cites the completion of both requirements thus they are still connected as complementary initiatives focusing on the graduate student-supervisor working relationship.]
| (2) | The Student-Supervisor Guidelines will ensure that newly established supervisory relationships start out strong since they facilitate discussion on topics that are important to both graduate students and supervisors including: expectations, roles and responsibilities, modes and frequency of communications/meetings, funding supports, work schedule, authorship, data collection and stewardship, IP, among others. |
| (3) | The Progress Report is completed at least once per year and provides opportunity for students to meet with their supervisors (and committee when established) to discuss academic progress, celebrate successes, identify areas needing improvement, setting new goals for the next year, and revisiting any items in the Student-Supervisor Guidelines that many have changed year-over-year. The progress report provides important feedback for students and allows supervisors to set clear expectations and timelines for improvement should progress be considered unsatisfactory. |
| | With the length of time that has passed since this item was considered at GFC Exec (May 10) and the June 7 GFC meeting, several changes have been made to the documents largely to respond to ongoing feedback received through consultation. The changes include the following: |
| | - Governance Executive Summary: A few minor changes to include additional consultation discussions and dates, among other changes for clarity in wording. |
| | - FGSR Adjunct Academic Appointment and Graduate Student Supervision Policy (new version, May 12): |
| | - The categories in 1b have now been split into employees (1b) and academic colleagues (1c) to better differentiate and ensure inclusion |

2 of 55
of these categories. As such, in 2d, the language was changed from appointees to employees, and 2f was added to better specify the requirements for academic colleagues (from 1c), especially that the development program is encouraged but not required.

- In what was previously 1e (now 1f) - the wording was modified.
- In 2e, clarifying language about this special situation and the development program was added.
- In 4b, it was noted that concerns related to a graduate student-supervisor working relationship may also be taken to the Associate Dean (Graduate) of the disciplinary faculty.
- Section 3d has been revised and 3e has been added, both of which now more accurately reflect what happens when a graduate student’s supervisor leaves the UofA.

- **Graduate Student Supervision Development Procedure:** The nomenclature throughout was adjusted to reflect the changes in the Policy (above), and “appointees” was changed to “employees”. Also, “members” was changed to “Graduate Student Supervisors” in 2c. The language in 3b was modified.

- **Calendar Language:**
  - The text coloured in red under “Registration” has been expanded to better reflect the way that the registration restriction will be used. Similar language has also been included under the “Responsibilities Related to Supervision” section.

- **Graduate Student Supervision Development - Draft Course Design:** A new draft (May 10 instead of April 14) has been included. This content continues to be developed; it is still in draft form. The document has been included for information to show the planned outline and content of the development program.

- **Letters of Support:** The addition of a Letter of Support from Marc Waddingham, GSA President 2020-2021, and a letter from the Science Graduate Student Association Council (SGSAC) were included at the beginning of the letters of support.

- **Note also that when this item comes forward for approval, it will include two motions:** one for the UofA calendar items (the Student-Supervisor Guidelines and the Progress Report); and, one for the UAPPOL pieces (the FGSR Adjunct Academic Appointment and Graduate Student Supervision Policy and the Graduate Student Supervision Development Procedure).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Engagement and Routing (Include meeting dates)</th>
<th>Those who have been consulted:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Consultation and Stakeholder Participation (parties who have seen the proposal and in what capacity)</td>
<td>(1) FGSR Adjunct Academic Appointment and Graduate Student Supervision Policy &amp; the Graduate Student Supervision Development Procedure</td>
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<td>&lt;For information on the protocol see the Governance Resources section Student Participation Protocol&gt;</td>
<td>- FGSR Decanal and Executive Team – ongoing</td>
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<td>- BLRSEC - May 29, 2020</td>
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<td>- GEFAC - October 22, 2020</td>
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<td>- Policy Review Committee (FGSR) - November 4, 2020</td>
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<td>- FGSR Council - November 25, 2020 (Notice of Motion)</td>
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<td>● GEFA - December 3, 2020</td>
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<td>● UofA Legal Team/Faculty Relations (Provost’s Office) - December 16, 2020 (Consultation)</td>
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<td>● Grad Program Support Team - January 28, 2021</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>● Faculty Relations (Provost’s Office) - February 2021</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>● BLRSEC - February 12, 2021 (Written Update)</td>
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<td>● PACC - February 16, 2021</td>
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(2) Student-Supervisory Guidelines and (3) Progress Report

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<td>Approval Route (Governance) (including meeting dates)</td>
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### Strategic Alignment

**Alignment with For the Public Good**

FGSR is uniquely positioned to realize Objective 14 in *For the Public Good*: “Develop and implement programs and processes to assure high quality, collegial graduate student and post-doctoral fellow supervision and mentorship.”

Also, positively bolstering the student-supervisor relationship will assist with Objective 19, which is to “prioritize and sustain student, faculty, and staff health, wellness, and safety by delivering proactive, relevant, responsive, and accessible services and initiatives”.

### Alignment with Core Risk Area

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<tr>
<th>Enrolment Management</th>
<th>X Faculty and Staff</th>
<th>X Relationship with Stakeholders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X Funding and Resource Management</td>
<td>X IT Services, Software and Hardware</td>
<td>X Reputation</td>
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<td>X Leadership and Change</td>
<td>X Physical Infrastructure</td>
<td>X Research Enterprise</td>
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<td>X Safety</td>
<td>X Student Success</td>
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### Legislative Compliance and jurisdiction

**Post Secondary Learning Act**

1. **FGSR Adjunct Academic Appointment and Graduate Student Supervision Policy & the Graduate Student Supervision Development Procedure**

   - Article 7.02.1 of the Faculty Agreement lists the "supervision of graduate students" as a form of "participation in teaching programs".
   - As noted in the University of Alberta calendar under Graduate Regulations, the Supervisor’s basic duties are noted under **Responsibilities Related to Graduate Programs: Supervisor**.
   - Established University of Alberta policies (e.g. Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate, or Sexual Violence).
(2) Student-Supervisory Guidelines

- The Student-Supervisor Guidelines (SSG) formalizes an existing policy currently within the GFC approved Academic Calendar. This policy requires a meeting early in the supervisory relationship between graduate students and their supervisors to discuss and arrive at a shared understanding of a range of important topics.
- The SSG also formalizes the “FGSR Template Conversation Checklist for New Graduate Students” that was established several years ago, and takes into account additional expectations on communication between graduate students and their supervisors.

(3) Progress Report

- The Progress Report similarly formalizes and standardizes an existing policy within the GFC approved Academic Calendar. This policy mandates formal regular meetings to take place at least once annually between graduate students and their supervisors (and supervisory committees when constituted). The Report also provides a template to maintain a year-over-year record of student progress that is discussed at these meetings.

Attachments:
1. FGSR Adjunct Academic Appointment and Graduate Student Supervision Policy (UAPPOL)
2. Graduate Student Supervision Development Procedure (UAPPOL)
3. Graduate Student Supervision Development - Draft Course Design
4. Student-Supervisor Guidelines and Progress Report Calendar
5. Letters of Support

Prepared by: Brooke Milne - Vice-Provost and Dean, FGSR; graddean@ualberta.ca
FGSR Adjunct Academic Appointment and Graduate Student Supervision Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office of Accountability:</th>
<th>Provost and Vice President (Academic)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Office of Administrative Responsibility:</td>
<td>Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approver:</td>
<td>Board of Governors and General Faculties Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scope:</td>
<td>Compliance with this University policy extends to all Academic Staff and Colleagues and Support Staff as outlined and defined in Recruitment Policy (Appendix A and Appendix B: Definitions and Categories) in addition to visiting speakers, professor emeriti, and undergraduate and graduate students.</td>
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Overview

Graduate student supervision forms an important component of an academic staff member’s teaching and research duties, and the University of Alberta recognizes and respects the essential role that both graduate students and graduate student supervisors serve in the academic and research mandates of the institution. One of the most important indicators of graduate student success is a positive working relationship with their supervisor. Strong, positive working relationships between supervisors and graduate students directly influence the student’s learning experience and the graduate student supervisory experience including the overall mental health and wellbeing of all parties.

The University will ensure that graduate students are taught, advised, and mentored throughout their degree programs by graduate student supervisors who possess relevant supervisory and mentorship experience, who are active in research and teaching, and who understand and support University policies and procedures. The University will also ensure resources and administrative supports are readily available and easily accessible to graduate student supervisors to promote professional development and success in this essential mentorship role.

Graduate student supervisors will receive an adjunct academic appointment in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR). This appointment acknowledges the shared commitment of FGSR, graduate student supervisors and the graduate program academic units to promote graduate student success and effective mentorship in a safe, equitable, and respectful work and learning environment.

Purpose

This policy sets out the criteria for an adjunct academic appointment in FGSR, and states explicitly existing expectations for what constitutes satisfactory graduate student supervision.

All graduate students at the University are registered in FGSR for the duration of their graduate program. FGSR is responsible for setting and maintaining institutional standards in graduate education and confers all graduate degrees.
These policies and procedures formalize the central role FGSR holds within the University of Alberta, its relationship to graduate students and graduate education, and its responsibilities to provide academic administrative supports and professional development opportunities for graduate students and their supervisors.

**POLICY**

1. **CRITERIA FOR GRADUATE STUDENT SUPERVISORS**

   a. A graduate student supervisor must:
      
      i. Be active in the general subject area of the graduate student’s research;
      
      ii. Demonstrate continuing scholarly or creative activity of an original nature; and
      
      iii. Either hold a degree equivalent to or higher than that for which the graduate student is a candidate or have a demonstrated record of successfully supervising students for the degree.

   b. Employees in the following categories as defined in Recruitment Policy Appendix A are able to serve as graduate student supervisors with specific supervisory privileges as recommended by the Dean of the academic unit to the Vice-Provost and Dean (FGSR) (template TBD):
      
      i. Academic Faculty Members appointed under Schedule A of the Collective Agreement;
      
      ii. Executive Members (Excluded), who will be appointed or re-appointed as Academic Faculty Members on the conclusion of their term;
      
      iii. Academic Administrators (Excluded), who will be appointed or re-appointed as Academic Faculty Members or Faculty Service Officers on the conclusion of their term;
      
      iv. Faculty Service Officers appointed under Schedule B of the Collective Agreement;
      
      v. Academic Teaching Staff Members appointed under Schedule D of the Collective Agreement; and
      
      vi. Trust Research Academic Staff Members (including Research Associates) appointed under Schedule E of the Collective Agreement.

   c. Academic colleagues (who are not employees of the University) in the following categories as defined in Recruitment Policy Appendix A are able to serve as graduate student supervisors with specific supervisory privileges as recommended by the Dean of the academic unit to the Vice-Provost and Dean (FGSR) (template TBD):
      
      i. Special Continuing Academic Colleagues;
      
      ii. Academic Affiliates (Secondees to the University);
      
      iii. Adjunct Academic Colleagues; and,
      
      iv. Clinical Academic Colleagues.

   d. Professors Emeriti will complete supervision of those graduate students actively registered in a program but, normally, will not take on supervision of new students post-retirement unless otherwise defined within the graduate program’s supervisory policies and/or as approved by the Dean of the academic unit.

   e. Conflicts of interest and conflicts of commitment will be disclosed by graduate student supervisors and managed in accordance with University and FGSR policies.

   f. Graduate programs will maintain their own supervisory guidelines, which will be shared with FGSR and which must align with any other FGSR minimum requirements, as applicable. The graduate program supervisory guidelines will specify criteria for granting limited or unlimited supervisory privileges.
2. ADJUNCT ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS IN FGSR

a. Graduate student supervisors that are eligible in accordance with this Policy will receive an adjunct academic appointment in FGSR.

b. The adjunct academic appointment in FGSR will be active for the duration of the individual’s appointment at the University, subject to fulfillment of responsibilities in section 3.b, and will not require an application for renewal.

c. All existing employees under section 1.b and academic colleagues under section 1.c (whether currently supervising graduate students or not) prior to [the approval date of this Policy], are able to serve as graduate student supervisors and will automatically receive an adjunct academic appointment in FGSR. These adjunct academic appointees in FGSR are encouraged to complete the FGSR supervisory development program (see Published Procedure below), but it is not required.

d. New employees under section 1.c appointed to the University after the effective date noted in section 2.c will be able to serve as graduate student supervisors and will receive an adjunct academic appointment in FGSR, however, they will be required to successfully complete the FGSR supervisory development program in order to retain their adjunct academic appointment in FGSR. The supervisory development program should be completed as soon as possible but no later than two years after the employee’s official start date.

   i. If the supervisory development program is not completed within two years, the Dean of the academic unit will assign a co-supervisor who has active adjunct academic status in FGSR.

   ii. In consultation with the Dean of the academic unit, the Vice-Provost and Dean of FGSR will pause the new employee’s adjunct status until the development program is completed.

   iii. Upon completion of the development program, the new employee’s adjunct status will be reinstated by the Vice-Provost and Dean (FGSR), and the Dean of the academic unit will decide if the co-supervisor will remain in place.

e. Notwithstanding section 2.d, in instances where a new employee is appointed at the rank of associate or full professor, a request to automatically grant an adjunct academic appointment in FGSR can be made by the new employee’s Chair and/or Dean of the academic unit to the Vice-Provost and Dean of FGSR. These adjunct academic appointees in FGSR are encouraged to complete the FGSR supervisory development program but it is not required.

f. New academic colleagues under section 1.c appointed to the University after the effective date noted in section 2.c will be able to serve as graduate student supervisors with specific supervisory privileges as recommended by the Dean of the academic unit and will automatically receive an adjunct academic appointment in FGSR. These adjunct academic appointees in FGSR are encouraged to complete the FGSR supervisory development program but it is not required.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF A GRADUATE STUDENT SUPERVISOR

a. If a graduate student has a co-supervisor, then the term “graduate student supervisor” refers to the both supervisors.

b. The graduate student supervisor is directly responsible for:

   i. Assisting the student in planning a program of studies;

   ii. Assisting in ensuring that the student is aware of all program requirements, degree regulations, and general regulations of the academic unit and the FGSR;

   iii. Providing counsel on all aspects of the student's program;

   iv. Staying informed of the student's research activities and progress;

   v. Ensuring, to the best of their abilities, that the student conducts their research in a manner that is as effective, safe, and as productive as possible;
vi. Arranging for, and attending, all supervisory committee meetings and the student’s examinations, and ensuring that these are scheduled and held in accordance with the FGSR regulations;

vii. When going on leave or an extended period of absence, ensuring that the student is adequately supervised by assigning an acting supervisor. (When the student is in a doctoral program, the acting supervisor should be a member of the supervisory committee); and,

viii. Reviewing the thesis, both in draft and in final form, and returning feedback in a timely manner.

c. The graduate student supervisor will:

   i. Meet with their thesis-based graduate student(s) and complete with them, and the supervisory committee when established, the FGSR student progress report form at least once during a 12 month period (progress reports can be filled out once every four months as required);

   ii. Hold an introductory meeting with all incoming thesis-based graduate students in the first term of the student’s program, and no later than 12 months from the program start date, and complete the Student-Supervisor Guidelines (template TBD); and

   iii. Be familiar with the Guidelines for Supervision and Mentorship for Faculty and Administrators resource (see Related Links below).

d. If an employee under section 1.b or a special continuing academic colleague under section 1.c.i resigns from the University, the academic unit will notify FGSR of their resignation and the affected individual’s adjunct academic appointment in FGSR will be retained in order to facilitate the completion of those graduate students already in their program. The Dean of the academic unit may, in accordance with the graduate program’s supervisory guidelines, recommend specific supervisory privileges to accompany this change of appointment.

e. If an academic colleague under sections 1.c. ii, iii or iv leaves the University prior to the end of their appointment term, the academic unit will notify FGSR and the affected individual’s adjunct academic appointment in FGSR and supervisory privileges will be ended (see also section 2.b).

f. The annual evaluation of graduate student supervisors will be completed in accordance with the evaluation processes defined within the Collective Agreement for academic staff members or relevant policies and procedures for other categories of supervisors.

4. COMPLIANCE AND COMPLAINTS

a. Failure to comply fully with this Policy, or parts thereof, will be dealt with in compliance with the Collective Agreement and/or relevant University policies and procedures.

   i. While this Policy outlines the role and responsibilities of supervisors, student compliance is addressed by The Code of Student Conduct, which outlines the expected behaviours for students; as well as the policies and regulations affecting them as set out in the University calendar.

b. Concerns related to a graduate student-supervisor working relationship may be taken to the Associate Dean (Graduate), the Dean of the academic unit, and/or to the Vice-Provost and Dean (FGSR).

c. Any complaint, formal or informal, that is made will be handled within an environment of safe disclosure for complainants where they are not subject to reprisal for reporting allegations made in good faith.

   For further information on complaints and both the informal and formal resolution processes, refer to the Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate Policy, the Discrimination and Harassment
DEFINITIONS

Any definitions listed in the following table apply to this document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate Student</th>
<th>A student registered with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjunct academic appointment</td>
<td>Employees and academic colleagues who make substantial contributions to another department/faculty outside of their home department/faculty without expectation of compensation from the other department/faculty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Agreement</td>
<td>This is the agreement between AASUA and the Governors of the University of Alberta in effect at the relevant time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FORMS

- Template for New Appointment Recommendation (TBD)
- Appointment of Supervisor(s) and Supervisory Committee Form (TBD)

RELATED LINKS

Should a link fail, please contact uappol@ualberta.ca.

- UAPPOL: Consensual Personal Relationships INFORMATION DOCUMENT
- UAPPOL: Recruitment Policy Appendix A
- UofA Calendar: Graduate Regulations
- UofA Calendar: Supervision and Supervisory Committees
- UofA Calendar: A Supervisor’s Responsibilities Related to Graduate Programs
- UofA Calendar: Conflict of Interest for Graduate Student Supervisory and Examination Committees
- FGSR Guidelines for Supervision and Mentorship for Faculty and Administrators
- UAPPOL: Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accomodate Procedure
- UAPPOL: Student Concerns and Complaints Policy – Records and Privacy
- UAPPOL: Discrimination and Harassment Complaint Procedure
PUBLISHED PROCEDURES OF THIS POLICY

FGSR Supervisory Development Program
Graduate Student Supervision Development Procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office of Administrative Responsibility:</th>
<th>Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approver:</td>
<td>General Faculties Council and Board of Governors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope:</td>
<td>Compliance with this University procedure extends to all Academic Staff and Colleagues and Support Staff as outlined and defined in Recruitment Policy (Appendix A and Appendix B: Definitions and Categories) in addition to visiting speakers, professor emeriti, and undergraduate and graduate students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overview

The University supports a culture that focuses on the importance of the working relationship between a graduate student supervisor and their graduate students. This procedure establishes the required development for new employees to undertake in order to attain an adjunct academic appointment in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (as outlined in the FGSR Adjunct Academic Appointment and Graduate Student Supervision Policy).

Purpose

To outline the development requirements for new employees, and the availability of optional development for continuing graduate student supervisors.

PROCEDURE

1. IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPMENT

Supervisors will acquire through the development program:

   a. An understanding of best practices in graduate student advising;
   b. An awareness of the policies and procedures at the University of Alberta and how these apply to the campus community; and,
   c. Familiarity with teaching supports available on campus and where they can be accessed.

2. CONTENT OUTLINE

   a. The development program will emphasize the need to incorporate Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, as well as Indigenous perspectives in graduate education;
   b. It will also include material / resources on University policies and procedures, and EDI and Indigenous perspectives; and,
   c. Ideally, graduate student supervisors will participate in a practice of self-reflection to understand what it means to become, and remain, a conscientious and successful graduate student supervisor and mentor.
d. Areas identified for the development program will be the following:

i. Building Student Supervisor Relationships;  
ii. Communication;  
iii. Professional Development;  
iv. Conflict Resolution; and,  
v. Wellness.

e. Content for the development program will be regularly updated, in consultation with an ad hoc “Supervisory Development Requirement” advisory group, taking into account new supervisor feedback, emerging areas of need/concern, refinement of best practices, etc.

f. The delivery of the development program will embody principles in universal design and accessibility, and combine both online modules and in-person workshops.

g. The duration will be approximately 10 hours total (8 online and 2 in-person) and new supervisors will be able to access the development program as soon as their appointments are approved. Ideally, the in-person workshops will be held during new staff orientation activities so as to foster a cohort effect across campus.

3. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

a. The graduate supervision development program content will be created, delivered, and maintained by FGSR in collaboration with campus partners (e.g. the Office of the Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Office of the Vice Provost (Indigenous Programming and Research), Centre for Teaching and Learning, Office of the Vice-Provost and Dean of Students, senior academic staff members); and,

b. FGSR will be responsible for tracking the FGSR academic adjunct appointments and completion of the supervision development program.

c. Graduate programs will maintain their own development, training, mentoring, and orientation practices specific to their academic units.

DEFINITIONS

Any definitions listed in the following table apply to this document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use. [▲Top]

| Term | Enter the definition for the term in this column. There is no limit to the number of terms you may define. Terms should be listed here in the order they appear above. If you do not need to define any terms, do not delete this section. Delete this row only and change the above message to read “There are no definitions for this Procedure.” |

FORMS

Should a link fail, please contact uappol@ualberta.ca. [▲Top]

No Forms for this Procedure.

RELATED LINKS

Should a link fail, please contact uappol@ualberta.ca. [▲Top]
GRADUATE STUDENT SUPERVISION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM: OVERVIEW

FGSR Supervisory Initiatives - Building Capacity in the Graduate Student Experience, Graduate Student Success, and Enhancing the Graduate Student-Supervisory Relationship

While every supervisor has first-hand experience of being supervised through the course of their own graduate experience, typically this supervisory experience is made up of a handful of people. While reflection on personal experience is undoubtedly valuable, this limited exposure to different approaches to the supervisory relationship can result in a narrow understanding of the characteristics of high quality supervision and may not be informed by University of Alberta policies and procedures.

The Graduate Student Supervision Development Program seeks to advance and support strong graduate supervision while ensuring that all new faculty appointees know where to access support, information, and resources related to graduate supervision. The Program provides information and education about universal principles related to high quality supervision and creates awareness and understanding about university policies, procedures and resources. This education will help new faculty appointees to be successful at the start of their academic careers. The end goal is to build a strong foundation of institutional support and awareness that will proactively work to shift our institutional culture as it relates to graduate student supervision. The program will also give supervisors the tools to be more efficient in their training of graduate students by knowing where to seek resources, what are the best practices in graduate supervision, and how to deal with issues effectively.

For current graduate student supervisors, little will change; they will be automatically granted an FGSR Adjunct Academic Appointment. While not mandatory, current supervisors are also encouraged to participate in the Graduate Student Supervision Development Program. The Graduate Student Supervision Development Program is, however, required for new appointees to retain full FGSR Adjunct Academic Appointment status. The Program aims to establish and maintain a strong community of practice focused on supporting supervisors and graduate students to be successful in their working relationships and graduate programs. Current graduate student supervisors can support the development of the community of practice by sharing their knowledge and expertise in the optional panel discussion that rounds out the Program.
PROGRAM: DESIGN DESCRIPTION, OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The Graduate Student Supervision Development Program advances and supports strong graduate supervision by providing formative training for new faculty appointees. It ensures that all new faculty appointees have equal access to support, information and resources related to graduate supervision, and are informed about university policies and procedures that will help them be successful at the start of their academic careers.

The Program takes 10 hours in total and consists of asynchronous online learning and facilitated discussion. Upon completion of the 10 hours, participants also have the opportunity to participate in an optional, interdisciplinary panel discussion where experienced supervisors will share their knowledge and expertise about graduate student supervision. The Program design is grounded in:

- A hybrid format that blends flexible, self-paced learning (Modules 1-6) with synchronous facilitated discussion (Module 7)
- Compliance with universal and accessibility principles
- Research related to best practices in supervision/mentorship
- UAlberta policy and legislative frameworks that support the supervisory relationship
- Interdisciplinary perspectives on high quality graduate student supervision
- Institutional priorities related to EDI, including Indigenization and Decolonization

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Equip graduate student supervisors with education and support related to graduate supervision, university policy, and procedures
- Furnish graduate student supervisors with strategies to deal with typical and more difficult mentoring situations
- Establish and maintain a strong community of practice focused on supporting supervisors and graduate students to be successful in their working relationships and graduate programs
- Support an ethical imperative and leadership role in cultivating high quality graduate supervision
- Embody and foster shared principles across all faculties wherein we collectively recognize, and work to promote and support best practices resulting in strong graduate student supervision
- Support in development/revision of a Statement of Mentorship

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Distinguish supervision and mentorship and describe the roles and responsibilities therein
- Identify and explain key policies, legislative frameworks, and procedures that guide the supervisory relationship and ensure an environment of safety and dignity for all
- Identify and describe strategies that support high quality graduate supervision, including relationship building, productive communication, conflict resolution, wellness, and career development
- Define, recognize, analyze issues that can emerge in the supervisor-student relationship
- Set and monitor personal goals related to graduate student supervision
- Create or revise a Faculty Statement of Mentorship

Modified DD: 19 May 2021
PROGRAM MODULE OVERVIEW

MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE GRADUATE STUDENT SUPERVISION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (Asynchronous)

Objectives:
● Build an understanding of why supervisory development supports graduate student supervisors and students, and excellence and innovation in research and scholarship
● Develop an understanding of why land acknowledgement is important in the supervisory relationship
● Provide an overview of the knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes that characterize high quality supervision
● Outline the roles and responsibilities related to graduate education
● Provide an overview of a Faculty Statement of Mentorship, it's purpose and the main components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Module Breakdown</th>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>1.0 Welcome to the Graduate Student Supervision Development Program</td>
<td>Welcome to the Supervisory Development Program FGSR’s role in graduate education and support for supervisors Support and resources for supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>1.1 We are all Treaty People</td>
<td>Examine why Land Acknowledgements important in the supervisory relationship and how to create your own territorial acknowledgement Explore what it means to live, work, research, and mentor graduate students with land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>1.2 Mentoring Mentors: Building a culture of growth in graduate supervision</td>
<td>Contextualize graduate supervision training within: 1) University of Alberta priorities; and, 2) the Canadian post-secondary landscape Examine how graduate student supervision training as means to support: 1) better graduate supervision and mentorship; 2) increased research productivity and the responsible conduct of research; and, 3) adherence to university policy and procedures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 1.3 Indicators and Outcomes of High Quality Supervision:
- Explore student-supervisor relationships as professional, academic relationships
- Examine indicators and outcomes of high-quality supervision

### 1.4 Student-supervisor Guidelines
- Examine the University of Alberta policies and procedures that support the supervisory relationship
- Outline areas for responsibilities for: 1) graduate students; 2) supervisors; 3) academic advisors; 4) supervisory committee; 5) departments, 6) Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research; and 7) Council of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

### 1.5 Developing a Statement of Mentorship: A Introduction
- Explore how a statement of mentorship supports a reflective approach to graduate supervision and how it can support professional development and growth?
- Outline the structure and components that make up a statement of mentorship
- Explain how the Graduate Student Supervision Development Program will facilitate the development of a Statement of Mentorship

### 1.6 Learning in Action
- Faculty Statement of Mentorship: Part 1

**TOTAL: 85 minutes**

## MODULE 2: BUILDING AND MAINTAINING WORKING RELATIONSHIPS (Asynschronous)

**Objectives:**
- Distinguish supervision and mentorship
- Build knowledge of the policy and legislative frameworks that support an inclusive supervisory relationship
- Explore approaches to Indigenization and decolonization in post-secondary institutions
- Understand policies and procedures that support the safety, dignity and inclusion of all members of the UAlberta campus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Module Breakdown</th>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>2.0 The Mentorship Relationship</td>
<td>Explore the mentorship relationship--graduate students as junior colleagues&lt;br&gt;Examine the difference between supervision and mentorship and explore the benefits of a combined approach&lt;br&gt;Explain what it means to be a self-reflective mentor and outline behaviours and attitudes that signal this approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>2.1 Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity and the Supervisory Relationship</td>
<td>Examine the policy and legislative frameworks that support EDI in the supervisory relationship&lt;br&gt;Outline rights and responsibilities related to human rights, accommodation, and inclusive learning and working spaces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduce critical theory: Intersectionality and oppression
Outline strategies to EDI in the supervisory relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Module Breakdown</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 15 min | 2.2 Indigenizing and Decolonizing the Academy | Approaches to Indigenization within post-secondary institutions
Indigenous Programming and Research Portfolio at the University of Alberta: Implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action
Mentoring Indigenous students |
| 30 min | 2.3 Supporting a Safe Teaching and Learning Community | Discrimination, Harassment, and Duty to Accommodate Policy (15 min)
Sexual Violence Policy (15 min) |
| 15 min | 2.4 Learning in Action | Faculty Statement of Mentorship: Part 2 |

TOTAL: 90 minutes

Campus Consultation/Design Partners
Janet A. W. Elliott, University of Alberta Distinguished Professor and Canada Research Chair in Thermodynamics (Faculty of Engineering)
Victoria Ruetalo, Associate Dean, FGSR-SSHRC
Indigenous Research Task Force
Florence Glanfield, Vice-Provost--Indigenous Programming and Research
Nella Sajlovic, Indigenous Strategies Manager, Provost and Vice-President Academic
Jennifer Ward, Lead Ed. Developer, Indigenous Focus, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Kisha Supernant, Co-lead, Situated Knowledges (Anthropology)
Donnell Willis, Advisor, Office of Safe Disclosure
Evelyn Hamdon, Senior Advisor, Equity and Human Rights, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Sam Pearson, Director, Sexual Assault Centre
Trudy Cardinal, Associate Professor and Associate Chair, Faculty of Education

MODULE 3: STRATEGIES FOR REGULAR, OPEN AND PRODUCTIVE COMMUNICATION (Asynchronous)

Objectives:
- Build knowledge of the role and responsibility of the supervisor and mentor
- Develop strategies for regular, open, and productive communication
- Establish foundational knowledge of how cultural differences can be leveraged
- Develop an understanding of the importance of listening in the supervisory relationship
- Build understanding of how the annual progress report can be used as a tool to foster student productivity and shared understanding of academic milestones

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Module Breakdown</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>3.0 Establishing a Foundation for High Quality Supervision</td>
<td>Leveraging the first meeting to: 1) align expectations; 2) set norms for healthy communication; 3) establish a foundation for productivity; 4) discuss students’ goals for their program of study; and, 5) initiate a plan for degree completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>3.1 Annual Progress Report</td>
<td>The annual progress report as a tool to support an iterative, self-reflective approach that balances students’ need for structure while fostering academic independence and intellectual growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>3.2 Understanding and Leveraging Intercultural Differences with Your Mentees</td>
<td>Cross-cultural challenges that emerge within the supervisory relationship  Decolonizing the supervisory relationship  Strategies for a productive intercultural relationship  How can you help students to bring their worldviews into their research?  Cultural diversity as a pathway to creativity and innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 min</td>
<td>3.3 The Art of Listening</td>
<td>The importance of listening in the mentorship relationship  Barriers to effective listening  Overcoming barriers to effective listening  “Already-Always Listening:” What we hear and what we listen “Authentic Listening”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Campus Consultation/Design Partners**
Victoria Ruétalo, Associate Dean, FGSR  Anne-José Villeneuve, Faculty St. Jean  International Student Services, University of Alberta International  Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, Student Ombuds  Billy Strean, Professor, KSR

**MODULE 4: Guiding Research and Scholarship**
- Outline researchers’ internal and external accountabilities  
- Examine the policies, procedures, and resources that support supervisors in guiding research and scholarship

| 80 min | 4.0 Ethics and Academic Citizenship Requirement for Graduate Students (5 minutes) | How does the new Ethics and Academic Citizenship Requirement help graduate students understand the benefits and responsibilities of belonging to an academic community, including activities associated with research, teaching, and learning?  What are program specific requirements and deadlines for completion related to the Requirement? |
| 4.1 Mentoring for Ethical Research (15 minutes) | Research at the University of Alberta: Institutional, scholarly, and professional expectations, and external accountabilities  Resources available to UAlberta researchers  Supporting graduate students with research ethics: What they need to know |

Modified DD: 19 May 2021
| 4.2 Intellectual Property (15 min) | - How is authorship determined?  
- What are graduate students’ intellectual property rights in their various research roles?  
- Who owns data produced in a graduate student’s thesis?  
- What are supervisors’ rights to graduate students’ discoveries/inventions?  
- What resources are available should a dispute arise regarding intellectual property and/or co-authorship? |
| 4.3 Publishing and Copyright (15 minutes) | - How does copyright intersect with scholarly communications and open access publishing?  
- What are graduate students’ rights and responsibilities related to copyright? What support and resources are available for interpreting publisher policies and negotiating publication agreements? |
| 4.4 Data management (15 min) | - What responsibilities and accountabilities do researchers’ have as it relates to data management?  
- What is involved with a Data Management Plan (DMP) and what supports are available for creating one?  
- What support and resources are available to researchers for the ethical management of data? |

| 15 min | 3.3 Learning in Action | Faculty Statement of Mentorship: Part 3 |

**TOTAL 145 minutes**

**Campus Consultation/Design Partners**
Susan Babcock, Director, Research Ethics Office
Amanda Wakaruk, Copyright and Scholarly Communication Librarian
James Doiron, Research Data Management Services Coordinator and Academic Director, University of Alberta Research Data Centre

**MODULE 5: CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION (Asynchronous)**

**Objectives:**
- Build knowledge of underlying sources of conflict
- Develop strategies for conflict management and resolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Module Breakdown</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Module</td>
<td>Topics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.0 Conflict Management and Resolution in the Supervisory Relationship</td>
<td>Common sources of conflict and how parties perceive it. Communication strategies and early intervention methods as a tool to resolve and manage conflict, including: conflict management coaching, restorative conferences, and facilitated mediation. Modeling and learning best practices in conflict management and resolution.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Learning in Action</td>
<td>Faculty Statement of Mentorship: Part 4</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

TOTAL 60 minutes

**Campus Consultation/Design Partners**
Natalie Sharpe and Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, Student Ombuds
Office of Safe Disclosure

**MODULE 6: HEALTH AND ACADEMIC PRODUCTIVITY**
(Asynschronous)

**Objectives:**
- Examine how health impacts students and supervisors in their academic life
- Explore strategies to healthy strategies to manage personal and academic commitments, support ethical personal conduct, and build productivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Breakdown</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.0 Framing The Conversation: Data and Mental Health Context of Graduate Students at the University of Alberta (15 minutes)</td>
<td>What does the data tell us? What does the data tell us about International, Indigenous, Black, and students who parent or are caregivers? What are graduate students' rights related to health? (10 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Identifying, Referring and Helping Students in Distress (15 minutes)</td>
<td>What are common indicators of distress among graduate students? What are key strategies for assisting graduate students in distress? How do I distinguish between a situation requiring a referral and one demanding immediate action? What are the resources available to graduate students and supervisors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Health and Academic Productivity</td>
<td>The impact of health on academic productivity for students and supervisors. Health as a pathway for productivity. Promoting and supporting health in the supervisory relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Learning in Action</td>
<td>Faculty Statement of Mentorship: Part 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL: 60 minutes
### Campus Consultation/Design Partners
Janice Causgrove Dunn, Associate Dean, FGSR  
Sarah Flower, Manager, Health Promotion, HR  
Suman Varghese, Registered Psychologist, Clinical Counselling Services  
Josee Ouellette, Counsellor, Student Wellness, Campus St.-Jean, Academic Support  
Doug Gleddie, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies, Faculty of Education

## MODULE 7: CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
(Asynchronous)

### Objectives:
- Build understanding of the Professional Development Requirement  
- Explore how supervisors can support students’ professional aspirations  
- Develop strategies to support career conversations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Module Breakdown</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 10 min | 7.0 Professional Development (PD) Requirement | Why a Professional Development (PD) Requirement?  
What is involved in the PD Requirement?  
What is the role of FGSR, f departments and supervisors in the PD Requirement? |
| 20 min | 7.1 Mentoring for Career Conversations: Supporting Graduate Students in Times of Uncertainty Me | Why is it important for supervisors to have career conversations as part of the mentorship relationship?  
Why are supervisors well-positioned to mentor for career conversations?  
What does it mean to have a career conversation with graduate students?  
How do I get started with mentoring for career conversations? |
| 10 min | 6.2 Learning in Action | Faculty Statement of Mentorship: Part 6 |

**TOTAL: 40 minutes**

### Campus Consultation/Design Partners:
Deanna Davis, Senior Lead and Educational Curriculum Developer, Graduate Teaching and Learning, FGSR  
Tyree McCrackin, Career Advisor, Career Centre  
Renee Polziehn, Director, Professional Development, FGSR

## MODULE 8: FACILITATED DISCUSSION-- CASE STUDIES
(Synchronous, F-2-f/Virtual)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Module Breakdown</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>105 min</td>
<td>8.0 Applying Your Knowledge: Facilitated Cohort Discussion</td>
<td>Participants will analyze several case studies that bring together complex issues outlined in Modules 1-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modified DD: 19 May 2021
8.1 Next Steps: Refining Supervisory Skills and Competencies

Building a supervisory reflective practice
Support and resources for supervisors for ongoing skill and competency development

TOTAL: 120 minutes

Campus Consultation/Design Partners
Indigenous Research Task Force
Florence Glanfield, Vice-Provost--Indigenous Programming and Research
Jennifer Ward, Lead Ed. Developer, Indigenous Focus
Janet A. W. Elliott, CRC in Faculty of Engineering -CIHR, NSERC
Victoria Ruetalo, Associate Dean, FGSR
Billy Strean, Professor, KSR
Student Ombuds (Natalie Sharpe and Remonia Stoddart-Morrison)
Office of Safe Disclosure
Janice Causgrove Dunn, Associate Dean, FGSR
Sarah Flower, Manager, Health Promotion, HR
Suman Varghese, Registered Psychologist, Clinical Counselling Services
Jasmine Bajwa, Registered Psychologist, Clinical Counselling Services
Josee Ouellette, Counsellor, Student Wellness, Campus St.-Jean, Academic Support
Doug Gleddie, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies, Faculty of Education
Deanna Davis, Senior Lead and Educational Curriculum Developer, Graduate Teaching and Learning, FGSR
Tyree McCrackin, Career Advisor, Career Centre
Renee Polziehn, Director, Professional Development, FGSR

Supporting Resources/Resources on Hand
The case studies will apply much of the theory and research discussed in each of the modules. See below for further references.

Resources for Further Investigation
The case studies will apply much of the theory and research discussed in each of the modules. See below for further references.
Supporting Resources

MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO GRADUATE STUDENT SUPERVISION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

For the Public Good: Institutional Strategic Plan, University of Alberta
University of Alberta: Vision, Mission, and Values
Acknowledgement of Traditional Territory
Territorial Acknowledgments: Going Beyond the Script
Quality of Graduate Supervision Committee 2010, “Recommendations on Improving Quality of Graduate Student Supervision at the University of Alberta” Report
Krogman Report (2014) “The Quality of Graduate Student and Post-Doctoral Supervision at the University of Alberta”
Report to Board Human Resources and Compensation Committee (BHRCC) on supervision in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019
Report to Board Learning, Research and Student Experience Committee (BLRSEC) on supervision in 2018, 2019
Supervisory Guide developed and endorsed by FGSR Council in 2018
Responsibilities Related to Graduate Programs
Supervision and Examinations
Code of Student Behaviour
Conflict Policy: Conflict of Interest and Commitment and Institution Conflict
Information Document: Consensual Personal Relationships
OHS Act, Regulation and Code

MODULE 2: BUILDING AND MAINTAINING WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

What is Reconciliation?
Indigenous Research Guide, University of Alberta Library
Protected Areas and Grounds Under the Alberta Human Rights Act
Human Rights at the University of Alberta
Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity, University of Alberta
Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate Policy
Duty to Accommodate Procedure

Modified DD: 19 May 2021
Sexual Violence Policy
Ethical Conduct and Safe Disclosure Policy


MODULE 3: STRATEGIES FOR REGULAR, OPEN AND PRODUCTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communicating Expectations
Template for Conversation Checklist for a New Graduate Student
Supervisory Committees
Guidelines for Ownership of Research Materials
Ethics Review
Research and Scholarship Integrity Policy
Research Administration Roles and Responsibilities
Animal Research Ethics
Human Research Ethics
Tri-Agency Frameworks: Responsible Conduct of Research
Tri-Agency Statement of Principles on Digital Data Management
Defining Academic Citizenship

Intellectual Property Guidelines for Graduate Students and Supervisors

Intellectual Property Guidelines for Graduate Students and Supervisors
Progress Report Policy
How to Ensure a Rewarding Thesis-based Student-Supervisory Experience at the University of Alberta
Defining Academic Citizenship

Modified DD: 19 May 2021
MODULE 4: CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION

Harrison, Tyler R. "My professor is so unfair: Student attitudes and experiences of conflict with faculty." Conflict Resolution Quarterly 24, no. 3 (2007): 349-368.


Foundations of Responsible Research

MODULE 5: HEALTH AND ACADEMIC PRODUCTIVITY

Graduate Student Mental Health and Wellness Report (July 2018)
Ro, Christine, Pandemic harms Canadian grad students’ research and mental health, Nature 18 August 2020, https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-020-02441-y


Graduate Student Mental Health Toolkit: A guide to supporting graduate students’ mental health, Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health, Canadian Mental Health Association, 2020

MODULE 6: CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mentoring for Career Conversations (Presentation)

Modified DD: 19 May 2021
Resources for Further Investigation by Module

**MODULE 2: BUILDING AND MAINTAINING WORKING RELATIONSHIPS**

Indigenous Canada MOOC, Faculty of Native Studies
First Nations, Métis, Inuit Subject Guides
Aboriginal/Indigenous Resources
Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action
National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
Office of the Treaty Commissioner: We are All Treaty People
North Campus Indigenous Student Services (First Peoples' House)
Resources for Supervisors, FGSR

Episode 1: Bullying and Harassment, Podcasts on Effective Supervision, FGSR
Episode 4: Sexual Violence, Podcasts on Effective Supervision, FGSR

**MODULE 3: STRATEGIES FOR REGULAR, OPEN AND PRODUCTIVE COMMUNICATION**

Episode 3: A Healthy Psychological Environment for Grad Students and their Supervisors, Podcasts on Effective Supervision, FGSR

**MODULE 4: CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION**

The Faculty of Extension and ADR Learning Institute offer a certificate through their course series in Conflict Resolution [https://ext.ualberta.ca/enroll/conflict-resolution](https://ext.ualberta.ca/enroll/conflict-resolution)

**MODULE 5: HEALTH AND ACADEMIC PRODUCTIVITY**

Episode 2: The Mental Health Games We Play, Podcasts on Effective Supervision, FGSR

Graduate Student Assistance Program- Homewood Health
Mental Health Resources
Supporting Student Mental Health
Supporting Mental Health for Faculty

**MODULE 6: CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Mentoring for Career Conversations: IDP Review Guide for Faculty
FGSR's Professional Development (PD) Requirement: Information for Supervisors


Catherine Mayrey, “Honest, open and two-way- have HOT career conversations with your graduate students,” in University Affairs, 18 September 2020. Accessed 23 September 2020, [https://www.universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/responsibilities-may-include/honest-open-and-two-way-have-hot-career-conversations-with-your-graduate-students/](https://www.universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/responsibilities-may-include/honest-open-and-two-way-have-hot-career-conversations-with-your-graduate-students/)


Modified DD: 19 May 2021

### Responsibilities Related to Graduate Programs

**Student**

Graduate students are ultimately responsible for their own programs, and are expected to be familiar with all program regulations and deadlines relating to their programs.

The students’ fundamental responsibilities include:

- ensuring that their registration is accurate and does not lapse;
- submitting appropriate forms to the department for signature and processing;
- paying all fees required by the deadline dates set out in the Calendar;
- maintaining open communication with their supervisor or advisor and graduate coordinator concerning any problem;
- in the event of a conflict in the supervisor-student or advisor-student relationship, discussing it with the supervisor or advisor and graduate coordinator in a timely fashion;
- being aware of the expectations of the supervisor and the department;
- making research results accessible (beyond their appearance in a thesis) to an appropriate audience.  

#### if registered in a thesis-based program, the student is also responsible for:

- completing the Student-Supervisor Guidelines, with their supervisor, within the first term of study, but no later than 12 months from the student’s program start date and;
- ensuring the completion of the Progress Report at least once annually and no more than once every four months as required.
Please read the Calendar carefully. If you are in doubt about the regulations pertaining to your graduate program, consult your department or the FGSR.

Students are encouraged to carefully read the Calendar and to contact their department or FGSR if they have questions or require clarification about their specific program regulations.

Note: If a student switches streams to a thesis-based stream, they will be required to complete a Student-Supervisor Guidelines form within the first 12 months of their new program, and Progress Reports following the regulations as outlined in the calendar.

**Supervisor**

The supervisor is essential to the successful completion of thesis-based graduate degree programs. If a graduate student has a co-supervisor, then the term "supervisor" refers to both supervisors.

The supervisor is directly responsible for the supervision of the student’s program. The supervisor
- assists the student in planning a program of studies
- assists in ensuring that the student is aware of all program requirements, degree regulations, and general regulations of the department and the FGSR
- provides counsel on all aspects of the student's program
- stays informed of the student's research activities and progress
- ensures that students conduct their research in a manner that is as effective, safe, and productive as is possible
- arranges for and attends all supervisory committee meetings and the student’s examinations, ensuring that these are scheduled and held in accordance with FGSR regulations
- when going on leave or an extended period of absence, ensures that the student is adequately supervised by the provision of an acting supervisor. In the case of doctoral students this should be a member of the supervisory committee
- reviews the thesis both in draft and in final form.

The graduate student supervisor will:
- meet with their thesis-based graduate student(s) and complete with them, and the supervisory committee when established, the FGSR student
Graduate Coordinator

The term graduate coordinator refers to an associate chair, associate dean, director, or any other individual officially designated by the head of the unit as being responsible for the unit’s graduate programs.

Graduate coordinators must be tenured or tenure-track faculty members.

Graduate coordinators have a duty to ensure that departmental and Faculty rules are administered in a fair and equitable manner. This often involves going beyond a mere application of the rules, and may entail using moral persuasion on colleagues and students.

However, since the various units within the University contain a variety of graduate programs and operate under a diversity of policies, regulations and customs, the exact role of the graduate coordinator will vary.

The responsibilities of the graduate coordinator may include:

- ensuring that the regulations and requirements of the FGSR and the University are met
- being the official representative of the department to its graduate students
- admitting applicants to graduate programs
- acting as an advisor concerning the appointment of supervisors, supervisory committees, and external examiners
- acting as an advisor concerning any changes to a student’s status or program
- carrying out FGSR and University policies relating to graduate students
- completing the Supervisor-Student Guidelines with thesis-based students in instances where a supervisor has yet to be appointed after 12 months since the start of the student’s program;
- acting as an advisor concerning any changes to a student's status or program;
- carrying out FGSR and University policies relating to graduate students;
- ensuring that the regulations and requirements of the FGSR and the University are met;
- being the official representative of the department to its graduate students
- admitting applicants to graduate programs
- acting as an advisor concerning the appointment of supervisors, supervisory committees, and external examiners
- completing the Supervisor-Student Guidelines with thesis-based students in instances where a supervisor has yet to be appointed after 12 months since the start of the student’s program;
- acting as an advisor concerning any changes to a student's status or program;
- carrying out FGSR and University policies relating to graduate students;
● acting as a liaison between the FGSR and the unit;
● coordinating financial support for graduate students, including fellowships and assistantships;
● monitoring the academic progress of graduate students;
● providing advice to graduate students on the rules and procedures of the FGSR and the department;
● keeping the FGSR informed of any changes in the student’s program, including student status, course and program changes, scheduling of examination dates; and,
● initiating and coordinating graduate student recruitment activities.

[...]

Regulations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

[...]

Registration

Registration Procedure
Once newly-admitted and continuing graduate students in degree programs have determined their program requirements in consultation with their departments, they register using the Bear Tracks web registration system. See Registration and Fees for University regulations on registration in courses, re-registration in courses, changes in registration, cancellation of registration and auditing courses. See Academic Schedule for registration deadlines.

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research deadline dates may differ from undergraduate deadline dates (see Academic Schedule and End-of-Program Registration Deadlines for thesis-based students.

There may be academic record and fee implications for withdrawing from courses. See Registration and Fees.

In instances where a student and supervisor do not complete the Student-Supervisor Guidelines (within 12 months of the student’s program start date) and/or the Progress Report (annually at minimum), the student’s registration in subsequent terms will be restricted as a last resort and temporarily so as to determine a plan for completion. In these unlikely instances, FGSR will assist the student and supervisor in the completion of the requirement(s) and remove registration restrictions immediately. Note: both the student and supervisor(s) will receive reminders to complete the requirement(s) in
Minimum Faculty Requirements
Regardless of the student’s category, the pass mark in any course taken while registered in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research is a grade of C+.

All students in degree programs (including time spent as a qualifying graduate student) or diploma or certificate programs must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.7 throughout the course of the program. (In cases where the cumulative grade point average falls between 2.3 and 2.7, departments may recommend the student be required to withdraw, or continuation in the program for a specified probationary period; in any case, convocation shall not take place with a cumulative grade point average of less than 2.7.) Notwithstanding the above, a student whose cumulative grade point average falls below 2.7 may be required to withdraw.

The above are minimum grades and grade point averages acceptable to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. Individual departments may require higher grades than these. See Graduate Programs.

Academic Probation
Academic probation is used to address deficiencies in program or performance standards relevant to a student’s particular program of studies such as CGPA, or progress in research. The conditions attached to a period of academic probation are designed to meet the specific needs of a student’s academic situation.

When a student’s term or cumulative grade point average falls between 2.3 and 2.7 or the minimum required by the program (See Graduate Programs), departments may recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research continuation in a graduate program on academic probation for a specified period.

Advance of any deadlines, allowing for inquiries to assist or to set out an alternate completion deadline.

Academic Standing
Minimum Faculty Requirements
Regardless of the student’s category, the pass mark in any course taken while registered in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research is a grade of C+.

All students in degree programs (including time spent as a qualifying graduate student) or diploma or certificate programs must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.7 throughout the course of the program. (In cases where the cumulative grade point average falls between 2.3 and 2.7, departments may recommend the student be required to withdraw, or continuation in the program for a specified probationary period; in any case, convocation shall not take place with a cumulative grade point average of less than 2.7.) Notwithstanding the above, a student whose cumulative grade point average falls below 2.7 may be required to withdraw.

The above are minimum grades and grade point averages acceptable to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. Individual departments may require higher grades than these. See Graduate Programs.

Students in thesis-based programs must ensure they complete, with their supervisor and/or supervisory committee, a Progress Report <link to new section> and submit it to FGSR at least once annually.

Academic Probation
Academic probation is used to address deficiencies in program or performance standards relevant to a student’s particular program of studies such as CGPA, or progress in research. The conditions attached to a period of academic probation are designed to meet the specific needs of a student’s academic situation.

When a student’s term or cumulative grade point average falls between 2.3 and 2.7 or the minimum required by the program (See Graduate Programs), departments may recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research continuation in a graduate program on academic probation for a specified period.
Change of Category
Departments may recommend a change of category to FGSR for doctoral students to master's programs due to poor academic performance.

When this occurs following the doctoral candidacy examination, please refer to Decision of the Candidacy Committee for details.

Required to Withdraw
Departments may recommend to FGSR that students be required to withdraw on academic grounds. Reasons for the recommendation include:

- Failure to maintain adequate academic standing; failure to meet requirements set out in a conditional admission; candidacy or final oral examination failure; or expiry of program time limit. Requests to require to withdraw for these reasons must be documented in the academic record or student's file: for example, grades, exam reports, etc;
- Failure to make satisfactory academic progress in other aspects of the program, such as adequate progress in research. Requests to require to withdraw for these reasons should be supported by evidence that the process of feedback, assessments and warnings has been followed;
- Failure to complete the practicum component of a graduate program, if that practicum component is an integral part of the program;
- Failure of the department to secure alternate supervision for a thesis-based student following dissolution of a supervisory relationship (see Resolving Conflicts in Supervisor-Student Relationships) as it is an academic requirement that thesis-based students have a supervisor (see Appointment of the Supervisor(s)).

For students in thesis-based programs, a student rating of ‘In Need of Improvement’ on a Progress Report <link to new section> will normally result in a recommendation for Academic Probation as determined by the supervisor and/or supervisory committee in consultation with the student.

Change of Category
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- Failure to make satisfactory academic progress in other aspects of the program, such as adequate progress in research. Requests to require to withdraw for these reasons should be supported by evidence that the process of feedback, assessments and warnings has been followed;
- Failure to complete the practicum component of a graduate program, if that practicum component is an integral part of the program;
- Failure of the department to secure alternate supervision for a thesis-based student following dissolution of a supervisory relationship (see Resolving Conflicts in Supervisor-Student Relationships) as it is an academic requirement that thesis-based students have a supervisor (see Appointment of the Supervisor(s)); and,
- For students in thesis-based programs, two consecutive student ratings of ‘In Need of Improvement’ or one rating of ‘Unsatisfactory’ on their Progress Report <link to new section> will normally result in a recommendation to withdraw from their program.
The following considerations apply:

- Cannot require to withdraw except for just cause;
- Students shall be given adequate warning, feedback and timelines related to what is the nature of the inadequate progress, what special performance would be required to rectify the inadequacy, and what is the timeline for demonstration of the required improved performance;
- Student should be given an opportunity to respond in writing to any warning given;
- Meetings with appropriate advisors (members of supervisory committee; Chair's designate, etc.) may assist the process of providing adequate warning and advice.

The decision to require a student to withdraw rests with the Associate Deans, FGSR. Students may appeal to the FGSR Academic Appeals Committee. For details, see Appeals and Grievances.

Supervision and Examinations

Supervision and Supervisory Committees

Departmental Regulations and Responsibilities
Departments are responsible for preparing a set of regulations and guidelines for supervisors and students. Guidelines should deal with the selection and functioning of supervisors and should outline the joint responsibilities of faculty members and graduate students. Options for students to pursue who believe they are receiving unsatisfactory supervision should also be specified.

Appointment of the Supervisor(s)
Every student in a thesis-based program is required to have a supervisor. The department that admits a student to a thesis-based graduate program is responsible for providing supervision within a subject area in which it has competent supervisors, and in which the student has expressed an interest.

Normally there is only one supervisor. Departments may consider the appointment of more than one supervisor for a student.

Implicit in the admission process is the following: on the applicant's part, that there has been an indication of at least
a general area of interest and, preferably, provision of some form of proposal, particularly if the program is at the doctoral level; on the department’s part, that the application has been reviewed, the area of interest examined, academic expectations and potential performance considered, and that the department accepts its obligation to provide appropriate supervision for the applicant in the specified subject area.

It is expected that every effort will be made to arrive at a mutually agreeable arrangement for supervision between the student and the department. Students are normally involved in the process for selecting their supervisor(s) although this process varies from program to program.

The authority for the appointment of supervisors rests with the Dean of the department’s Faculty. Such appointment decisions are final and non-appealable.

Article 7.02.1 of the Faculty Agreement lists the "supervision of graduate students" as a form of "participation in teaching programs". It is expected that a department will monitor and review the performance of supervisors.

Supervisors on Leave
It is the responsibility of supervisors to make adequate provision for supervision of their graduate students during their leave. Therefore, if a supervisor is to be absent from the University for a period exceeding two months, it is the supervisor’s responsibility to nominate an adequate interim substitute or indicate the means by which supervision will be maintained. It is the supervisor’s responsibility to inform the student and the department in writing at the time the leave is approved.

In instances when an interim supervisor is appointed, they are not required to complete Supervisor-Student Guidelines since the primary supervisor relationship remains intact during the leave period. The interim supervisor may, however, be required to complete a Progress Report if their appointment coincides with the annual deadline and a previous report during the calendar year has not already been completed (e.g. by the supervisor prior to the start of their leave).

Supervisors planning to take a sabbatical should follow the requirements found in Appendix E of the Faculty Agreement with respect to adequate advance arrangements for graduate students while a supervisor is on sabbatical.

Supervisors planning to take a sabbatical should follow the requirements found in Appendix E of the Faculty Agreement with respect to adequate advance arrangements for graduate students while a supervisor is on sabbatical.
Eligibility for Appointment as Supervisor

Time Line for the Appointment of Supervisors
Ideally, the supervisor for a thesis-based student, both master’s and doctoral, should be appointed as soon as the student arrives to begin their program of studies. If this is not possible, an interim academic advisor should be appointed by the department.

Supervisor(s) must be appointed within the first 12 months of the student’s program following the procedures approved by the Dean of the department’s Faculty and submitted to FGSR.

Introductory Meetings
Every department must develop a list of topics that will be covered during the introductory meetings between a supervisor and a graduate student. These meetings should be held during the term in which a supervisor is first appointed. Topics likely to be listed include program requirements, academic integrity requirements, the role of the supervisor, the composition of the supervisory committee, the preferred means of communication, the availability of funding, and scholarly practices and outputs.

Responsibilities Related to Supervision
The supervisor is directly responsible for the supervision of the student’s program. Refer to Responsibilities Related to Graduate Programs for further regulations.

Completion of the Supervisor-Student Guidelines
All students registered in a thesis-based program are required to meet with their supervisor (assigned at admission or with an interim academic advisor or the graduate coordinator if one has not yet been assigned - see Timeline for the Appointment of Supervisors) to complete the Supervisor-Student Guidelines as soon as possible after registration in the first academic term but no later than the submission of the first Progress Report, which is due in FGSR within 12 months from the student’s program start date.

If there is a change in supervisor at any point in a student’s program of study, the guidelines will be completed anew in accordance with the timeline noted.

Completion of the guidelines is required. In instances where the Supervisor-Student Guidelines are not submitted within the first 12 months from the student’s program start date, the student’s registration in subsequent terms will be restricted as a last resort and temporarily so as to determine a plan for completion. In these unlikely instances, FGSR will assist the student and supervisor(s) in the completion of the guidelines and remove registration restrictions immediately. Note: both the student and supervisor(s) will receive reminders to complete the guidelines in advance of any deadlines, allowing for inquiries to assist or to set out an alternate completion deadline.
If changes to the content of the Supervisor-Student Guidelines are made or required, these changes will be recorded on the student’s Progress Report indicating both parties have discussed and mutually agreed to them.

**Progress Report**

Student progress in thesis-based programs will be reported at least once annually to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research using the standardized Progress Report form. Progress reports are due in FGSR at minimum once every 12 months of the student’s original program start date. The progress report form should be filled out during the annual meeting required for all PhD students. Master’s thesis-based students also require at least one progress report completed within a full academic year.

Completion of the progress report is required. In instances where the progress report is not submitted at least once within a 12 month period, the student’s registration in subsequent terms will be restricted as a last resort and temporarily so as to determine a plan for completion. In these unlikely instances, FGSR will assist the student and supervisor(s) in the completion of the progress report and remove registration restrictions immediately. Note: both the student and supervisor(s) will receive reminders to complete the progress report in advance of any deadlines, allowing for inquiries to assist or to set out an alternate completion deadline.

In instances where more detailed monitoring of a student’s academic standing may be required, a progress report form may be filled more than once annually; however, only one (1) progress report may be submitted every four (4) months.

A student who receives two (2) consecutive evaluations of “in need of improvement” or one (1) “unsatisfactory” rating will normally be required to withdraw from their program and FGSR on the recommendation of the Associate Chair (grad) within their academic department and/or the Department Chair to the Dean of FGSR.

Justification:

Approved by:
Dear Colleagues of the University of Alberta,

I write this letter on behalf of the 2020-21 Graduate Students’ Association Executive in support of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research’s supervisory initiatives. The proposed mechanisms of graduate program oversight are welcome developments which faithfully recognize the concerns raised over a decade of advocacy from the GSA. As you are all aware the issue of student-supervisory relationships has been a longstanding priority for our association, and while we acknowledge that most supervisory relationships on campus are positive, there are still many cases of communication breakdown, neglect, and abuse which need to be documented, addressed, or better yet prevented.

From my perspective, the power and information asymmetry between a new graduate student and their supervisor can make necessary conversations difficult. When matters regarding the professional relationship are not properly addressed, including expectations around working hours, communication guidelines, funding, and so on, this can lead to tensions with potential to bring about animosity. I agree with the assessment that if these topics were part of a mandatory, institutional-level reporting process a significant number of these reported issues would be preventable. Given the requirements for tracking graduate student progress are outlined in the University Calendar, it follows that a unified approach is appropriate.

As per my previous statements at tables across campus, the current approach to assisting graduate students facing supervisory issues is inadequate, and not due to the efforts of the many units who contend with these issues. The problem is structural, as for a graduate student to raise a formalized complaint requires them to out themselves in a manner that poses significant risk to their studies and future academic career, especially in cases of malicious abuse by a supervisor. Typically, this results in the student choosing to keep their complaint anonymous, and they graduate or drop out with no resolution. Every time this cycle repeats, we allow for real harm, waste valuable time, and lose a potential advocate for our university.

The lack of a formalized progress tracking system lends itself to a “their word/your word” situation during conflicts, in which the faculty member disproportionately benefits. To reiterate, clear expectations and standardized reporting can shift the burden off the student to prove they are a teachable, productive trainee, and they can focus on their studies which then leads to the production of further positive records. It goes without saying this works vice versa given that this is common practice
through standard disciplinary measures for any student who is not meeting the minimum requirements of their program.

While I am personally aware of roughly a dozen cases of graduate student-supervisory conflicts, ranging from miscommunication, neglect, to outright abuse, I cannot share any of the accounts publicly. When I ask my colleagues if I can share their de-identified experiences, the answer always returns as no, with concerns that they will be found out and retaliated against for sharing their experiences. I believe this speaks to a deep-rooted culture of fear perpetuated in corners of the academy, which if left unchecked, will continue to levy an unconscionable human toll. Once we have reached the point that even anonymous accounts cease to be provided, we have crossed into truly dangerous territory as an institution.

During my tenure as GSA President, I had the privilege of watching the development of FGSR’s proposal, from the numerous consultations across the University of Alberta, to the extensive research of comparable procedures at fellow Canadian U15 institutions, and the demonstrations of the essentially complete IT reporting platform. The good-faith effort made to develop tools and procedures that both address the long-standing asks of the GSA and support academic units on campus is remarkable, and I believe the result is a fair balance between accountability, flexibility, standardization, and transparency.

Ultimately, the goal is not to develop punitive, reactionary measures that will further burden faculty members and administrative staff. Rather, the approach recommended here will alleviate workloads for many on campus, ensure institutional requirements are met, and markedly improve the aggregate supervisory quality on campus. To this end, the collaboration of exemplary supervisors on campus will be critical, as their guidance and leadership will be necessary to see that these efforts are fruitful. I believe that the collegial, humane instinct will triumph in the end.

If there are any questions, I believe the current GSA Representatives are equipped to speak to the matter and can contact me for any further comment or clarifications.

Kind regards,

Marc Waddingham
GSA President (2020 – 2021)
To: Chairs and Associate Chairs of Graduate Studies  
Faculty of Science  

Dr. Brooke Milne  
Vice-Provost and Dean of FGSR  

Dr. Matina Kalcounis-Rueppell  
Dean of Science  

We are writing on behalf of the Science Graduate Student Associations’ Council which collectively represents over 1200 graduate students over seven departments in **strong support of the proposed FGSR Graduate Supervisory Excellence Initiative and Academic Membership program.** As a council of research-based graduate students, we have collectively borne witness to the deleterious effects of supervisory mismanagement in our peer group. We acknowledge that many supervisory relationships are exemplary; however, **roughly 22% of PhD students at the University of Alberta found the quality of mentorship unsatisfactory** (CGPSS 2019, in Supervisory Initiatives Package). If the University of Alberta hopes to continue growing its international reputation for high standards of research, priority should be given to actively creating a space in which students can thrive.

We understand that while this initiative may be viewed as an additional burden to supervisors, it would be an essential component for the graduate program at UAlberta, closer aligning us with expectations for conduct and research already in place at other U15 Institutions.

We feel current administrative structures at the University of Alberta leave graduate students susceptible to neglect and exploitation by their supervisors. Standardization of expectations across campus provides a minimum standard of supervision that protects the most vulnerable students. The proposed initiative will also streamline existing Annual Report submission, eliminating administrative demands at the departmental level. It would also facilitate faster response times to conflicts via the inclusion of a confidential reporting system within the Annual Report which allows for students to disclose any supervisory issues to a neutral/external third party (FGSR). We laud the inclusion of this confidential reporting structure, as faculty and administration are often unaware of the reasons students struggle with their research, and default to attributing under-performance to student-based deficits. This leaves common institution-based drivers un-addressed (for review, see Sverdlik et al., *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 2018*). Departments are therefore unlikely to effectively detect internal stress points or address recurring problem behaviours in the student-supervisor relationship. The proposed Supervisory Initiative will build a culture of accountability within departments and the supervisor-student guidelines, established at the beginning of the degree, will increase the transparency of expectations from both parties.
We also support the inclusion of training modules available across departments. At present, onboarding of faculty is frequently left up to individual departments, which may not have sufficient resources to ease the transition to supervisor. Mandatory training for new faculty will ensure new supervisors have the relevant skills necessary to effectively and efficiently mentor graduate students through their studies. While this training is not being mandated for existing Faculty, centralized training available through the FGSR will allow for rapid response in cases where additional training is deemed necessary by Student-Supervisor conflicts.

We thank you for considering our letter of support for the FGSR Supervisory Initiatives and Academic Membership program. By providing consistent guidelines, comprehensive resources, and ongoing training through the Supervisory Initiatives, the FGSR may begin to ameliorate the pervasive mental health, discrimination and harassment problems that accompany academia (see Nature Editorial, 2019). We hope that by implementing the proposed initiatives we will see greater student retention through their degree programs, an increase in student wellbeing, and improvements in the quality and output rate of research. While we support the Student/Supervisor Initiatives as proposed by the FGSR, we feel strongly that it could do more to fully align us with the standards of supervision and accountability expected of other U15 Institutions. Below, we propose further improvements to the UAlberta initiative, both novel and incorporating structures from other U15 institutions.

Should you have any questions regarding the contents of the letter, please contact sgsac@ualberta.ca.

Regards,
Supplemental Information
Suggestions for improvement (Received from SGSAC - May 25, 2021)

Whilst we overwhelmingly support the Graduate Supervisory Excellence Initiative, there are a few areas in which we suggest improvements should be made or clarifications should be provided.

- **Standardised review of supervision by the students alongside the annual report**
  - We recommend a supervision review survey that is automatically e-mailed to students after submission of the June 30th Annual Report.
  - A standardized survey ensures a semi-quantitative review process and ensures that the students’ feelings are not open for interpretation.
  - Example questions:
    - Do you feel safe/comfortable/supported in your research group?
    - Is your research group a supportive and collaborative environment for developing research?
    - How often do you have correspondence with your supervisor?
    - Is your supervisor prompt with written review of submitted work?
    - Are you communicating clearly with your supervisor/are you being clearly communicated to?
    - Is your supervisor facilitating opportunities for career development?
    - Is your supervisor providing adequate support for completion of your degree requirements?
  - This builds a record that can be accessed in case there is a review.

- **Clarification on the protocols in place for safeguarding students**
  - A clear protocol that protects students against discrimination during the process of reporting complaints must be developed.
    - The present system does not offer complete anonymity or protection as specific cases must be disclosed in written format, the details of which could identify the student.
    - The standardised review process outlined above facilitates systematic data collection that would leave students less vulnerable to discrimination as their individual circumstances would not have to be disclosed, but alarming behaviours would be detected.
  - Additional clarification should be provided on how disclosures of sexual harassment in supervisor-student relationship are handled and what measures are put in place to protect the student.
• Development of an Exit Survey for graduate students regarding supervision
  ○ As students may be reluctant to speak out about supervisory issues during their program, an exit survey would provide space for students to provide feedback without the fear of it affecting their academic progress.

• Automatic review of Faculty Membership every 3-5 years, in addition to review triggered by unsatisfactory performance of basic supervisory duties.
  ○ This would align UAlberta with UCalgary’s Supervision Policy of an automatic review of supervisory privileges every 5 years.
  ○ Extra administrative/oversight resources should be allocated within FGSR to perform this review. Reviews which involve only Deans and Provosts automatically constrain the number of reviews which can be performed.
  ○ Review can be done through examining feedback from supervised students, gathered through the annual survey referenced below + exit surveys.

• Formation of a committee within FGSR to decide on suspension/revoking of supervisory privileges
  ○ This committee should include members from different Departments (e.g. request volunteers from Departmental EDI committees) to ensure buy-in from faculty.
  ○ A transparent review process and clarification of what constitutes unsatisfactory behaviour should be clearly outlined for faculty and graduate students.

• Members should have to take refresher courses or shorter additional courses based on program updates.
  ○ A streamlined refresher course should be made available and be required for continued membership.
  ○ Chair and associate chair positions (e.g. point person in the department for graduate student conflicts) should be required to take the full training (including if they already have existing membership).

• Shift in language of FGSR policy to remind Faculty that supervision is a privilege, not a right.
February 22, 2021

Dear Dr. Milne,

The Office of the Student Ombuds sees up to 400 graduate students annually; over 60% of their concerns are framed as conflict with their supervisors. We believe that the majority of these conflicts are tied to perceptions of relational and equitable unfairness and could be resolved by early intervention. Too often we see students hastily changing their supervisors or leaving their programs, damaging chances to recover their academic future. The repercussions of lack of early intervention include long-term damage to physical and mental health well-being, financial loss, family disruption, etc. The impact on international graduate students is exacerbated by cultural and linguistic miscommunication. We also recognize the toll on the supervisor-mentor, including time lost on projects, the loss of a future colleague and loss of funding that have been invested in the work the student was undertaking. The reputational damage to all parties, including the University, is considerable.

For several years, the OSO has worked collaboratively with FGSR, the GSA and others to help graduate students with supervisor concerns on an ad hoc basis. However, we know the necessary resources are there to restore relationships if we start with earlier, informal modes and strategies of intervention.

We therefore support FGSR in its Supervisory Initiatives and offer our expertise and support to rebuild supervisory relationships which we believe will help to reduce, if not eliminate, the negative repercussions of conflicts in these relationships. We believe that the University of Alberta has the capacity to provide leadership on best practices in maintaining healthy supervisor relationships.

Our staff: Dr. Brent Epperson, Graduate Ombudsperson (on leave), Remonia Stoddart-Morrison (PhD Candidate), interim Graduate Ombudsperson, Veronica Taylor, Graduate Ombuds Intern, and Natalie Sharpe (Director), look forward to contributing to this initiative.

Sincerely,

Natalie Sharpe, B.A. (Hon), M.A.
Director, Office of the Student Ombuds
University of Alberta
March 1, 2021

To: Dr. Brooke Milne, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

From: Donnell Willis, Advisor, Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights

Re: Letter of Support for FGSR Supervisory Initiatives

The Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights (OSDHR) provides this letter in support of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Supervisory Initiatives, including the introduction of academic membership and training, student-supervisor guidelines, and progress reports.

OSDHR’s mandate is to provide a safe, confidential, and neutral space for any university community member to disclose concerns of any potential wrongdoing, including but not limited to discrimination and harassment. Unfortunately, OSDHR receives a high number of disclosures pertaining to concerns between graduate students and supervisors.

Disclosures received by the OSDHR office include allegations of:
- Non-equitable practices of choosing graduate students, leading to further exclusion of under-represented, marginalized, or racialized students
- Miscommunication between student and supervisor, often leading to:
  - Break-down of supervisory/interpersonal relationship(s)
  - Unclear expectations regarding hours of work, lab time, or scheduling
- Intellectual proprietorship regarding research and data
- Harassment, including bullying
- Sexual harassment and/or sexual assault of graduate students by their supervisor
- Discrimination, on the basis of protected grounds covered under the Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate (DHDA) policy. Discrimination also includes the failure to accommodate graduate students.
  - For example, graduate students have disclosed that they have not been accommodated on the basis of gender-pregnancy, mental disability, physical disability, and/or religious beliefs.

It is crucial to realize the importance of the supervisory relationship between a supervisor and graduate student. A graduate student's likelihood of succeeding in their program and research, is largely dependent on the relationship, mentorship, and guidance from their supervisor. Given these factors, it must be recognized that there is a significant power dynamic within a supervisory relationship.

The supervisory initiatives led by FGSR will help create a more equitable and positive environment for both faculty and students. Academic membership and training, student-supervisor guidelines, and progress reports will provide clearer expectations for both parties. The supervisory initiatives will enable the University to respond more proactively, which will minimize harm to either party, through early intervention mechanisms.

OSDHR is fully supportive of this initiative, and encourages that it be implemented to all faculty members, not just new faculty members, or that it be adopted as best practices/culturally required training. Ideally, these supervisory initiatives will decrease the number of disclosures OSDHR receives regarding supervisor relationships.

Sincerely,

Donnell Willis
March 1, 2021

Dear Colleagues in Graduate Administration,

This letter is to share my strong support for FGSR’s Supervisory initiatives, particularly the Academic Membership in FGSR for all faculty eligible to supervise graduate students. I write this to you as a former Associate Dean for the Faculty of Graduate Studies from 2016-2019 who held the portfolio on graduate student supervision, and who authored a report in 2014 as the University of Alberta Provost’s Fellow entitled, “The Quality of Graduate Student Supervision and Post-Doctoral Supervision at the University of Alberta.” I also co-created, along with current Associate Dean Victoria Ruetalo, the podcasts on graduate student supervision. Both these podcasts and the supervision report are available for supervisory training resources through FGSR today (https://www.ualberta.ca/graduate-studies/about/resources-for-faculty-and-staff/resources-for-supervisors/index.html).

One of the most outstanding strengths of the University of Alberta is its research productivity and impact. Graduate students are a large part of that productivity and impact. Most graduate students come to the University of Alberta with great ideas, career hopes, and an earnest willingness to work hard to complete their degrees. A key element of their success, and a professor’s success with their research program, is the nature of the supervisory relationship. In my three years at FGSR I witnessed brilliant co-production of knowledge and creative works between supervisors and graduate students, and life-altering disasters because of poor relationships between supervisors and graduate students. Not only students suffer when there is acrimony or disappointment in a supervisor-student relationship, professors suffer as well. A culture of secrecy and shame often allows these relationships to fester or dissolve, with unhappy resolutions. Professors generally have no training around how to supervise graduate students when they start their positions, nor on-going training on how to manage a group of people on both individual and collective projects. Higher education institutions can do more to support these critically important relationships.

The Supervisory Initiatives FGSR is proposing helps set up both supervisors and students for success, recognizing that to supervise students, and hold such enormous influence over their success during their graduate education at the University of Alberta, is a privilege and opportunity. The training FGSR provides tips, exercises, recommend practices, and avenues for problem-solving to celebrate the role of the supervisor as a responsible and wise supervisor. The training offered is not a “one size fits all” approach, but recognizes both supervisors and students as whole persons in different disciplines with varied backgrounds. As now a Dean, overseeing five graduate programs in my faculty, I can attest to the need for a formal way to proactively support a positive supervisory culture on campus that sets out accountabilities and responsibilities for both students and supervisors, and their working relationship.

Respectfully,

Naomi Krogman
Dean, Faculty of Environment
To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept these letters of support for all of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research's current proposed initiatives aimed at addressing long-standing issues in graduate student supervision at the University of Alberta. These letters demonstrate that ongoing systematic issues in graduate student supervision have been of principal concern to the graduate student population for many years. The Graduate Students’ Association’s advocacy on this issue year-after-year shows that the issue has not whatsoever been addressed in a satisfactory manner up to this point. We hope that the accompanying letters will help others to understand the severity of this issue and the importance of FGSR’s ongoing work in this area.

Yours Sincerely,

The past executives of the Graduate Students’ Association
To Whom It May Concern,

The supervisory relationship is the most important relationship a graduate student has while at the UofA. The student-supervisory relationships underpin the working conditions and overall experience of graduate students. Despite the importance of the student-supervisory relationship, the UofA has a history of wide-scale supervisory issues that have gone largely unaddressed by the institution.

The GSA has records dating back many years regarding severe issues in supervisory relationships. Documented concerns arising from supervisory relationships are diverse. The most concerning have been cases of harassment, discrimination, and abuse experienced by students. These records were—unsurprisingly—accompanied by records of actions taken by the GSA to attempt to resolve these issues at the individual student level while advocating for systemic institutional change. In particular, the GSA has continued to raise that no accountability mechanisms exist to prevent recurring problematic concerns within supervisory relationships.

Throughout our term, we brought this issue to the attention of countless committees—including as a discussion item at the highest governing body at the U of A: the Board of Governors (Board Human Resources and Compensation committee & Board Learning, Research and Student Experience committee). As we advocated on this issue, we encountered knowing glances of other members of the university community in a privileged enough position to have been witness to what can only be adequately described as the grotesque atrocities that have been perpetrated on our university’s grounds. Despite the reputational and institutional risks, these members of the university community have been complacent to a longstanding problem while allowing the UofA to become an outlier among U15 institutions when it comes to institutional measures to support supervisory excellence.

Dr. Brooke Milne and the FGSR leadership team have taken what we believe to be the necessary steps to address these issues and bring forward mechanisms that align with best practices in graduate education. The critical work that FGSR is doing in that regard is one step forward to compete with other institutions that have been for long addressing the student-supervisor issues. For example, the U of C has issued what is known as the U of C Graduate Student Supervision Policy to ensure productive relationships between students and their supervisors as well as to have accountability mechanisms in place.

We sincerely believe that the continuation of widespread issues in graduate supervision at the university presents a real and present threat to the institution and everyone affiliated with it. To those that have seen the scale of this issue, this risk of this is all too obvious.

We—as veterans of this line of advocacy—believe that the proposed initiatives are imperative actions that must be adopted. FGSR and these tools are the U of A’s best shot at avoiding catastrophe and to begin to end a pervasive culture of tolerating problematic behaviour.

Yours Sincerely,

Fahed Elian (GSA President 2019-2020)
Dylan Ashley (GSA Vice-President Academic 2019-2020)
Chantal Labonté (GSA Vice-President Student Services 2019-2020)
To Whom It May Concern,

With this letter, we would like to offer our support for the proposed reforms currently presented by the FGSR to foster an environment of excellence in graduate supervision at the University of Alberta.

The close interpersonal relationships supervisors and graduate students need to navigate are fragile, especially when it comes to cross-cultural communication. One particularly memorable case from our cohort was a student that came to the GSA to disclose that their supervisor had requested them to perform a task, but their workload was already heavy. It was clear that the student felt uncomfortable saying no to their supervisor, afraid of the potential consequences. The GSA supported the student in providing feedback by email communication to the supervisor, explaining the situation and politely saying no. It became clear later on, that the supervisor had actually been very satisfied with the performance of the student and therefore requested them to do more. However, they were unaware of the cross-cultural differences and the fact that the student, who had a different nationality, would feel uncomfortable setting boundaries if their superior would request an extra task to be performed. This, unintentionally, created stress for the student and tension within the relationship.

In the above-described situation, the case was resolved in a positive manner and the supervisor was receptive to the communication of the student, relieving the tension. However, often students come to the GSA when tensions have already arisen in a conflict or beyond. It has become apparent that the problematic supervisory issues involve a minority of academic staff who are resistant to guidance on their supervisory practices. Despite intervention at all levels of university governance, this causes repeated problems for multiple students, meanwhile the individual supervisors are able to continue recruiting students despite their demonstrated incompetence as mentors.

The reforms proposed by FGSR would provide additional incentives for supervisors with a problematic record to improve their behaviour. It would prevent these individuals from reflecting poorly on their colleagues and on the generally excellent standard of supervision at the University of Alberta. In addition, with proposed training, supervisors can identify and navigate cross-cultural differences and adapt their communication and expectations accordingly. This would prevent a large number of the cases seen by GSA executives on a yearly basis. Therefore, we hope you will support the presented changes to solve the current issues and foster excellence in supervision at the University of Alberta.

Yours Sincerely,

Sasha van der Klein (GSA President 2018-2019)
Beth Richardson (GSA Vice-President Labour 2018-2019)
To Whom It May Concern,

With this letter, the 2017-2018 GSA President and VP Labour would like to support the proposed changes by FGSR, particularly the components that can address processes for students to resolve conflicts with their supervisor.

Up to now, only two routes have been available to students; either an Article 16 complaint under the Faculty Collective Agreement, or, in case a student is also employed as a Graduate Assistant, a grievance under the GSA Collective Agreement. Both processes take a long time to resolve and often requires students to disclose their identity. For many students, this is impossible, as the ramifications of possible retaliation are higher stakes than the need to resolve the conflict. The power-imbalance between student and supervisor and the role of the academic lifeline a supervisor plays in a graduate student’s academic career are the undeniable cause of students unwillingness to address even the most heartbreaking problems. It is common knowledge within the GSA Executive team and our professional management, that grievances under the current Collective Agreements are not a useful tool in either preventing or resolving issues.

Only once in the past decade has a graduate student put forward a grievance under the GSA Collective Agreement based on supervisory issues. Although the grievance was started in the 2014-2015 cohort, only during our academic year was the case concluded, when the student had already left the university several years earlier due to the conflict. As was expected, the grievance process dragged on for a long time and the case was carried over between many executives. Our cohort learned in 2018 that the final conclusion of the case was unsatisfactory and still damaging for both parties. The current proposed Supervisory Initiatives, including Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Academic Membership, will provide a solid structure for preventing the above-described situations and provide tools to resolve recurring issues in a better manner.

In the history of graduate supervision, the Graduate Students’ Association has advocated for improved quality of supervision at the University of Alberta and supported graduate students who are victims of supervisory negligence or abuse. Systemic issues have been carried over from one Executive to the other, often without satisfactory solutions for the root cause of the problem. Herewith, the 2017-2018 GSA Executive would like to stress the importance of addressing the cause, support the current presented solutions, and commend the leadership of FGSR for striving towards becoming a champion in supervisory excellence in the academic world.

Yours Sincerely,

Babak Soltania (GSA President 2017-2018)
Sasha van der Klein (GSA Vice-President Labour 2017-2018)
To Whom It May Concern,

With this letter, we would like to support the current FGSR Supervisory Initiatives by highlighting some examples of the caseload on supervisory issues of the 2016-2017 term. One case was particularly memorable, where multiple individual students came forward separately, all with similar stories about their supervisor's behaviour. The stories ranged in level of severity, but amongst others, the following situations were described:

- Performing physical labour unrelated to their project or their laboratory projects, without proper safety gear or working conditions
- Intrusion to privacy of students by installing cameras in office areas
- Financial retaliation on performance
- Prolonging examination without just cause, either candidacy or final exam
- Intentionally setting students up against each other, creating tension, unhealthy competition, and distrust within the group
- Disrespectful communication, both verbally and in writing

In this specific example, the Office of the Provost and the GSA worked together diligently to try to resolve these issues either on an individual basis or collectively. Unfortunately, only a few of our efforts were successful, where it pertained to potential legal risk. Some students transferred to other supervisors, restarting their program from scratch, others were able to graduate after the involvement of the Department Chair and Faculty Dean, but lost their most important reference for their career after graduation. Yet, no tools were available to prevent new students from joining the laboratory group and it is expected that the GSA and the Office of the Provost may need to intervene again in years to come.

In the narrative of supervisory concerns, often the phrase has been used 'bad apples will always exist'. This is factually correct, however, neither FGSR nor the U of A currently has the right tools to remove or reduce the harm caused by these supervisors, and graduate students continue to become victims of such individuals. The proposed FGSR academic membership and training program for supervisors could provide a tool to ensure supervisors continue to grow and learn throughout their careers to meet the current needs of their students. In addition, it also ensures restrictions and training for poor supervisors, or even removal of their supervisory privileges which would prevent new graduate students from facing similar distressing, disturbing, or even abusive experiences as their predecessors, and protects the reputation of the University.

Yours Sincerely,

Sarah Ficko (GSA President 2016-2017)
Sasha van der Klein (GSA Vice-President Labour 2016-2017)
To Whom It May Concern,

The student-supervisor relationship is perhaps the most critical component of a thesis-based graduate program. A good supervisor facilitates their students’ academic learning and guides the scholarly output required for their degree program. Supervisors also mentor their students as junior colleagues, helping them to explore and develop their personal and professional goals, often even beyond the end of the student’s program.

While the consequences of poor supervision are, by now, well-known, their familiarity only makes the existence of such supervision more grotesque. For example, within our year in office, the GSA filed a labour grievance on behalf of a student for the first time under the GSA’s Collective Agreement. However, the grievance was not resolved for three years, leaving the student with no option but to leave their program, which also put their immigration status in Canada at risk. We dealt with another case of a supervisor exhibiting stalking behaviour, and still others where inappropriate expectations rooted in cultural differences were placed upon students. We helped multiple students in a single research group who, because their supervisor failed to edit their work in a timely manner and repeatedly changed expectations, took more than eight years to graduate.

But perhaps the most concerning cases were those which never happened. Numerous students used the GSA as a sort of safety valve, confiding to our organization numerous stories of unprofessional supervisory behaviour. These included situations involving sexual coercion and threats of academic, professional, and personal consequences. But despite the seriousness of these stories, the students did not wish to file formal complaints. They were too afraid of possible repercussions from their supervisor.

This is not to say that poor supervisors are bad people. Often, they do not realize how their words, actions, or expectations may be perceived by their students; what seems of little consequence to someone in authority can seem of existential importance to those whose future depends on that authority. Even the very best supervisors can benefit from additional training, and it is important to remember that most new faculty members are only recently removed from being Ph.D. students and postdoctoral researchers themselves. The skills necessary to succeed in those roles are not necessarily the same as those required to be an outstanding supervisor and mentor.

This is why GSA has consistently advocated for supervisors to maintain membership in a supervisory college. As part of this, new faculty members would be expected to partake in a training program, to ensure they have the skills, tools, and knowledge necessary to be effective supervisors and mentors, and to ensure their groups are run in accordance with the University of Alberta’s policies, philosophies, and expectations.

To this end, the FGSR created a non-mandatory Mentorship Academy in 2017, and then released a Supervisory Guide in 2018 to highlight best practices. We are pleased to see FGSR now taking the next step by instituting a formal Supervisory and Training Membership program. We understand that many faculty members may see this as an encroachment on their academic freedom. Instead, we see it as an opportunity for them to become even better equipped in their mission of uplifting the whole people.

Yours Sincerely,

Colin More (GSA President 2015-2016)
Sarah Ficko (GSA Vice-President Labour 2015-2016)
To Whom It May Concern,

We are writing to express our strong support for the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research's proposed initiatives to address ongoing issues in graduate student supervision at the University of Alberta. High-quality supervision and mentorship are essential to the success of a graduate student. While the vast majority of graduate supervisors take their roles seriously and work with professionalism and dedication to help graduate students succeed, every year the GSA sees cases of neglect and unethical behaviour. The worst cases involve discrimination as well as instances of personal, physical, sexual, and psychological harassment. GSA records showed that these problems preceded our time at the GSA. We regretfully had to handle them during our terms, and we know from the attached letters of our GSA colleagues that they continued. Despite the consistent advocacy of the GSA on the issue, as well as the hard work of FGSR, the Dean of Students Office, the Office of the Student Ombuds, the Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights, University of Alberta International, and others in complex individual cases, the issue persists because there are inadequate accountability mechanisms to deal with problematic supervisors.

During our term, we raised the issue to FGSR, the Office of the Provost, the Office of the President, and the Board of Governors. While there were positive outcomes in individual cases—some supervisors accepted constructive criticism and changed behaviours, other students transferred to new supervisors and successfully completed degrees—others sadly withdrew from programs or switched from PhD to masters programs to secure quicker exits from abusive supervisory relationships. Each of those unresolved cases is a loss for the student, the institution, and the academy. Each case is a story of broken dreams, wasted resources, a damaged institutional reputation, and an abuser emboldened by the lack of consequences. Some students reported lasting effects on their physical and mental health. The time has come to take responsibility for the institutional shortcomings that allow these enduring problems.

In the current context, labour grievances are incredibly rare. While students consider the option, they often decide not to follow through when faced with the complexity and timelines. Similarly, Article 7 (formally Article 16) complaints occur, but the process is incredibly slow and difficult to navigate. With decisions taking many months or even years, the formal article complaint process is often not a reasonable option for graduate students in time-limited programs who face financial and other constraints. The current Supervisory Initiatives that Dean Milne and FGSR propose, including Academic Membership in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, will establish a new framework to address cases of neglectful or abusive graduate supervision and provide much-needed tools to resolve these issues earlier and more effectively.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours Sincerely,

Brent Epperson (GSA President, 2013 - 2014; GSA VP Labour, 2012 - 2013)