

Guidelines for Effective Remote Supervision

Given the current situation the University of Alberta community is facing in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important for supervisors and graduate students to establish clear plans setting out how they will work together remotely for the duration of this situation. These plans should consider everyone's preferences for working at a distance from campus and one another. Guidelines for communication, meetings, and response times should also be established.

These are extraordinary circumstances where there is no precedent to consider. As events continue to evolve, the plans established by supervisors and graduate students will likely require adjustment, and patience and understanding from both parties.

Suggestions for students to consider while transitioning to a Remote Working environment:

1. Establish a dedicated workspace at home and create a daily work schedule identifying reasonable, doable tasks/goals. Set reasonable expectations of what you can accomplish during these stressful and unpredictable times.
2. Discuss with your supervisor how you will remotely access the resources you need to continue moving forward in your program. Ensure IT supports are in place to access data/resources from home.
3. Take appropriate measures to secure your data/information so that it cannot be readily accessed by a third party. Please see the Chief Information Security Officer's information about [securely working from home](#).
4. Check to make sure your supervisor has your current contact information, and share with others in your research group as you feel appropriate and necessary.
5. Familiarize yourself with reliable and preferred telecommunications platforms like Google Hangouts, Zoom, or Skype so that when meetings with your supervisor are scheduled, you are able to log in on time and without technical difficulties.
6. Be sure to take breaks and build downtime/self care into your work schedule.
7. Stay connected with friends, family, and members of your community so as to limit feelings of isolation, which can negatively affect personal wellness.
8. Be respectful of the demands on your supervisor's time and energy as they are likely dealing with remote delivery demands for Winter 2020 and Spring/Summer 2020 courses, in addition to potential child care challenges and employment interruptions for family members.

Suggestions for supervisors to consider to effectively supervise students working remotely:

1. Ask your students how you can support them to work remotely.
2. Make every effort to retain the current consultation/meeting/reporting schedule you have in place.
3. Make every effort to maintain existing meetings with research groups (as applicable) so that collegial connections are maintained and the collective scholarly momentum of the group is



preserved. This can be achieved using teleconferencing platforms like Google Hangouts, Zoom, and Skype.

4. If you know you are going to be unavailable for whatever reason in the coming weeks, advise your students of that now. If you know you will be away for an extended period of time, you must adhere to existing regulations to assign an interim supervisor so that your students are not stagnated in progress because of your absence.
5. Maintain regularly scheduled meetings with each student so that they can report their activities individually and gather direct feedback on their progress.
6. Be understanding and respectful of your student's time, situation, and effort in maintaining positive progression in their program. They are experiencing their own stresses and concerns just as faculty are.
7. Be mindful that 25% of all graduate students are parents. They will be trying to balance all of those demands as they transition to working from home. They may also be dealing with layoffs for spouses, partners, and their own selves at this time.
8. If the university enters into a facilities shut down, student time away from campus is not vacation time. As stated by [University of Alberta's Human Resource Services](#): *In accordance with Article 6.04 of the GSA Collective Agreement, academically employed graduate students with graduate teaching assistant (including principal instructor) appointments, graduate research assistantship appointments, and graduate research assistantship fellowships will continue to be paid until the conclusion of their current appointments.*
9. Expectations about what can be reasonably accomplished in these challenging times should be clearly communicated. Previous goals/milestones may need to be revisited and adjusted accordingly. Students are facing great uncertainty and will need latitude to adjust as best as they can.
10. If your students cannot deliver on goals set out before the COVID-19 situation happened, it will be important for supervisors to revisit and readjust expectations given the unanticipated, uncontrollable factors affecting this evolving situation.
11. Be sure to do wellness check-ins with your students and team, as applicable, so as to maintain points of connection for everyone.
12. Familiarize yourself with student support services via the [FGSR](#), [Dean of Students' office](#) and [GSA](#), and communicate them regularly to students so that they know it is okay to access them as needed.

Practical Research Considerations:

1. Researchers have been [directed](#) to "ramp down and conclude all non-essential research that requires institutional resources (e.g. infrastructure, power, cooling, water) and support."
2. Discuss and consider whether active ethics protocols for human/animal research require amendments. If you require guidance, refer to the information found on the Research Ethics Office [website](#). Contact reoffice@ualberta.ca if you require further clarification.
3. Be mindful of the university's [statement on research](#) and ensure compliance with those guidelines.