GRADUATE SUPERVISION MANUAL

A guide for faculty and students
Faculty of Nursing – Vision
To be the world-renowned academic and influential voice in professional nursing.

Faculty of Nursing – Mission
To promote health, equity, and quality of life for the public good by creating vibrant and supportive environments, advancing health science, and developing nurse leaders.

Faculty of Nursing - Values
The Faculty of Nursing embraces:
• Learner-centred teaching and learning
• Cutting-edge research
• Ethical behaviours, relationships, and partnerships
• Inclusive approaches to health, equity, global health, and well-being

*Shaping Tomorrow's Leaders: Faculty of Nursing Strategic Plan 2018-2023, (p.3)*
Introduction

The purpose of this document is to highlight policies and procedures guiding graduate supervision and supervisory relationships in order to create a context for exceptional graduate learning experiences and to facilitate the student’s timely progress through the Master of Nursing or PhD in Nursing program.

Guiding Principles

There are several basic principles that underlie nursing graduate supervision:

- All graduate student supervision in the Faculty of Nursing is carried out within the context of the vision and mission of the University of Alberta, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) and the Faculty of Nursing itself;
- The University Calendar is the official source for information regarding program information; any discrepancy found between this handbook and the calendar will be resolved according to the University Calendar;
- The FGSR provides leadership and policy around all areas pertaining to graduate studies, including student supervision (some sections of this document are taken directly from the FGSR manual);
- Faculty and students share responsibility for maintaining open and ongoing communication.

Role of the Nursing Graduate Studies Office

The Faculty of Nursing Graduate Services Office (GSO) and FGSR work collaboratively with all faculty and graduate students to provide accurate and timely information to ensure progression through the graduate program. On admission, all graduate students will be provided an orientation to the Faculty and to graduate studies. The Associate Dean, Nursing Graduate Studies, provides support and consultation to students and faculty regarding program planning, course availability, course selection, student feedback, graduate supervisory conflict, and other issues on an as-needed basis.

Overall, the GSO is responsible for the general administration of the graduate program, including processing applicant files and recommending admission to FGSR; maintenance of records; the preparation, organization and monitoring of graduate documents (ie. awards, examinations); liaison with FGSR; providing information and consultation to current and prospective students as well as the Faculty and the public; and the development, organization and provision of graduate courses (including registration, timetabling, wait-listing, etc.).
Graduate Student Supervision in the Faculty of Nursing

The Academic Advisor (MN students only)

The Associate Dean, Nursing Graduate Studies, assigns all newly admitted MN students an academic advisor taking into account the student’s selected area of study and faculty workload.

The advisor:
- encourages the student to be aware of all program requirements and regulations;
- assists with the selection of courses which meet program requirements and the interests and needs of the student;
- assists with any concerns which may arise during the program of studies;
- provides preliminary guidance as required in the selection of a thesis/capping area of investigation;
- assists in the selection of a Thesis/Capping Exercise supervisor, preferably by the end of the first year of the program.

The Supervisor (MN & PhD students)

In addition to the above, the supervisor:
- provides guidance to MN or PhD students as required in refining the topic of a thesis or dissertation;
- assists the student with scholarship/grant applications;
- submits annual progress report with student
- completes and submits program completion form when student has met all program requirements

NOTE: PhD students require a confirmed supervisor before an offer of admission will be made.

Please see FGSR Graduate Manual for a full listing and description of Supervision as it pertains to a graduate program.
Changing Advisor or Supervisor

A student may request a change of advisor or supervisor at any time by approaching the Associate Dean, Nursing Graduate Studies. It is expected that the student will first discuss this request with the assigned advisor. Academic advisors may also request that the Associate Dean reassign the student to another advisor. It is expected that the academic advisor will first discuss this request with the advisee. In exceptional circumstances, students may seek direction from the Associate Dean prior to speaking to the assigned advisor or supervisor.

Where a student feels the need to change his/her supervisor, it is important to adhere to the following guidelines:
- ensure that there has been attempted communication with the supervisor
- document conversations and emails with the supervisor (i.e. date, content of discussion, agreements made, etc.)
- meet with the Associate Dean, Nursing Graduate Studies to discuss issues and concerns
- if not satisfied with the result of the conversation with the Associate Dean, meet with the Dean of the Faculty of Nursing
- The Graduate Students’ Association also provides Ombuds Services, “a free, confidential and independent service to assist UofA graduate students in resolving University-related problems”. For further information please see the GSA website.

Where a student changes from an advisor to a supervisor when planning a Capping Exercise
- when a student has found a supervisor, they should email the Nursing Graduate Services Office (nursing.graduate@ualberta.ca (cc to the academic advisor and supervisor) with this information.

Problem solving and conflict resolution

When conflicts arise in a student and supervisor relationship, the first step is to open a discussion to try and resolve the issue(s). If this is not successful, the next steps to take are described in the FGSR Graduate Manual
Supervision

For faculty members considering graduate supervision
The following can be considered when receiving a request for supervision:

- how many MN and PhD students do I currently have? Are they full-time or part-time?
- where are my current students in their program?
- what feedback am I currently getting from students (i.e. need additional time, not getting the support they need, etc.)
- do I have an administrative role? If so, how much of my time does it take up?
- can I provide regular supervision? Is the topic and/or research methods that the student needs?
- are the student and I a good fit in research interests?
- will the student reach their academic goals under my supervision?

It is strongly recommended that all new faculty members co-supervise at least one student with an experienced faculty member to allow modeling and mentorship. Co-supervision may also be utilized by experienced faculty in order to provide the student with expertise in complementary areas (i.e. methods, substantive content areas, etc.).

What is a reasonable supervision load?

The following suggestions are based on discussions with Faculty members. In general, experienced Supervisors should avoid taking on more than 7 graduate students. No more than 5 should be at the PhD level; of these, no more than 2 should be at the same stage of their program. No more than 4 should be Master's students, since they typically require immediate attention and guidance. Less experienced faculty members should supervise fewer students than their experienced colleagues. These are guidelines only and will vary based on the faculty member’s workload, administrative role and their experience as a faculty member. The ultimate goal of supervision is to provide the student with an optimum graduate experience and the ability to provide this varies between faculty.

Specific Responsibilities of both Faculty members and Students

Faculty Responsibilities:
- be clear about expectations and document meetings with students (i.e. content of conversation, goals or expectations agreed to, etc.)
- use a consistent format / agenda to ensure that all students receive the same information
NURSING GRADUATE SUPERVISION MANUAL:
A guide for faculty and students

- complete student’s Annual Progress Report with student every year (usually due in June)
- act on student problems immediately; if necessary seek advice and / or inform the GSO
- review level of commitment with students (i.e. be clear about how much support you are able / willing to provide)
- advise GSO about “turning over” from the academic advisor to the supervisor
- inform committee members and GSO of changes in committee structure
- provide and organize space for students when needed
- negotiate timelines for giving feedback on submitted work (i.e. could be 1 month for major documents)
- respond to students (i.e. phone or email messages) within 1 (one) week unless away
- communicate clearly with students regarding absences that may impact work or communication schedule
- use absence messages on email and voicemail
- make adequate provision of supervision for supervision of graduate students during extended absences. Please see the FGSR Graduate Manual for more information on taking leave and faculty supervision responsibilities

Student Responsibilities:
- adhere to the University of Alberta Calendar deadlines and all rules for program completion
- attend orientation
- contact faculty member when beginning program (as assigned or at registration)
- contact the GSO if no communication has occurred with their advisor / supervisor within one week for general questions and / or within a month for assignment / paper feedback (this is not applicable if the faculty member has indicated through communication or a message that s/he is away)
- establish a plan for completion of thesis
- advise GSO of changes in name as well as changes to advisor, supervisor, supervisory committee, etc.
- provide / negotiate enough time for Faculty to read documents
- understand and complete the mandatory Faculty of Nursing Completion of Ethics Training and Professional Development
- attend learning opportunities provided by the GSO and Faculty of Nursing on funding and professional development
- complete Annual Progress Report with supervisor every year (usually due in June)
- ensure the completion of course work in a timely manner to avoid or ‘clear up’ IN (incompletes) on transcripts
- participate in leadership education (i.e. learning to become involved)
- become a citizen of the academic community / professional life / citizenship
- ensure registration requirement is maintained for the duration of their program
- utilize the ualberta.ca email account assigned to them at the beginning of their program for all correspondence with the GSO and their supervisor

Students are to familiarize themselves with the rules and regulations pertaining to degree requirements, specifically regarding the thesis project.

It is also important that each student be knowledgeable about *Intellectual Property Guidelines for Graduate Students and Supervisors at the University of Alberta*. 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, and paying all fees required by the deadline dates set out in the Calendar.

Students should familiarize themselves with the [Graduate Manual](#) and refer to it regularly throughout their program to ensure all policies and procedures are followed.

**Supervisory Committees**

**Thesis-based master’s students:**
The supervisory committee members are ex-officio members of the master’s final examining committee. Attention should be paid to the qualifications of the committee members as examiners to ensure the composition and size of the examination committee will be appropriate ([Examining Committee Membership Checklist](#)).

**Doctoral students:**
A doctoral supervisory committee must have at least three members, and must include all the supervisors.

The department should ensure that the members of a supervisory committee are sufficiently competent and experienced to serve at the required level. In forming a supervisory committee, the department should consider the rank and experience of the prospective members, their publications and other demonstrations of competence in the subject area or field of specialization, and the prospective members' experience in graduate supervision.

Attention should be paid to the qualifications of the committee members as examiners to ensure the composition of the examination committee will be appropriate as they are ex-officio members of doctoral examining committees ([Examining Committee Membership Checklist](#)).

The supervisory committee is chaired by one of the supervisors.
Compliance with the University of Alberta's Conflict Policy - Conflict of Interest and Commitment, and Institutional Conflict is mandatory.

The supervisor is responsible for ensuring committee meetings are held and making arrangements. The committee shall have a formal regular meeting with the student at least once a year. The department should maintain a record of meetings that have occurred and when students who are not on an approved leave fail to respond to requests to schedule a committee meeting.

For doctoral students, the department shall appoint the supervisory committee well in advance of the candidacy examination.
MASTER OF NURSING
Typical Progress Through the Master of Nursing Program
(Thesis or Course Based)

Enter Program
September
• Academic advisor and student work together to choose courses and plan program (3 courses / term)

Within 8 months
• All MN students have chosen research area of interest as well as supervisor
• Thesis students have Supervisory Committee established
• Course based students have decided on capping exercise topic.

Year I
Spring / Summer
• Thesis students - develop thesis proposal
• Course based students - develop capping exercise proposal & complete one course. See "Course-based Master's Capping Exercise Guidelines"

Year II
September - April
• Course work is completed for both thesis and course-based routes

Year II
May - September
• Thesis students - data collection, data analysis, final draft of thesis submitted
• Course based students - register in N900 and complete within one term

Year III
Fall
• Thesis students - Final Oral Examination
PhD (Nursing) Program
Typical Progress Through the PhD (Nursing) Program

Enter Program

- Supervisor and student work together to choose courses

Within 12 months

- Supervisory Committee chosen with Supervisor

Within 24 – 30 months

- Course work completed
- Comprehensive Exam scheduled and completed. See "Comprehensive Exam Guidelines"

27 – 30 months

- Candidacy Examination Committee established; exam scheduled and passed. Please see "Candidacy Examination Guidelines"

30 – 48 months

- Complete thesis research

48 months+

- Supervisor and committee begin preparing for Final Oral Exam. See "PhD Final Oral Examination Guidelines"
- External Examiner is invited to participate and is approved by FGSR
- Preliminary Acceptance of Thesis is signed by Committee members and sent to External

Final Exam

- Final examination is scheduled with all necessary paperwork submitted to GSO and supervisor and student familiarize themselves with thesis submission guidelines and convocation process. See "Final Oral Examination Guidelines" for important links.