

POLICY ON RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADVISORS, ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND GRADUATE STUDENTS AND GRADUATE STUDENT-ADVISOR MEDIATION PROCEDURES

This is the official policy of the University of Guelph approved in principle by the University Senate on January 15, 1991, and revised and reprinted annually thereafter. The request for a policy originated in the Board of Governors Committee on Student Rights and Responsibilities. The policy was developed by faculty/student committees of the Board of Graduate Studies in consultation with the departments and schools and with the university's solicitors. Mediation procedures for the resolution of disputes arising from disagreements in interpretation of the policy are included.

Preamble

Many individuals bring to graduate programs a rich and varied experience derived from universities throughout the world. This policy provides an outline of best practices and principles to guide the normal interactions within a graduate program at the University of Guelph. The University offers advanced degrees across a wide range of academic disciplines each of which has its own cultural variances with respect to how graduate research is conducted and how students are advised. Practices will vary as well depending on the nature of the student's research project and the stage the student is at in their program. Thus, the level of scrutiny and interaction may range from that occurring on a continuous basis to that in which the student operates quite independently with only occasional guidance. Regardless of the discipline, however, the underlying principle is one of mutual respect among students, faculty, and staff in an academic environment governed by traditional standards of research and professional integrity, without prejudice or discrimination. Within this context, the student, the Advisor, the Advisory Committee and the Department assume certain responsibilities or obligations and are entitled to expect reciprocal commitments. The policy is neither exhaustive nor exclusive and should be viewed in the context of normal circumstances.

This policy should be viewed as complementary to the University of Guelph statement on Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Responsibilities of the Advisor

A Faculty Advisor's primary task is to guide and inspire their students to reach their scholarly potential. The Advisor should promote conditions conducive to a student's research and intellectual growth, providing appropriate guidance on the progress of the research and the standards expected. Good supervisory practice includes the following:

1. Facilitating the student's intellectual growth and contribution to a field of knowledge.
2. Guiding the student, with the assistance of the Advisory Committee, in the development of a program of study.
3. Assisting in the development and execution of a research program or project.

4. Being reasonably accessible to the student via telephone, electronic communication or in person for consultation and discussion of the student's academic progress and research problems. What constitutes "reasonable accessibility" may vary according to discipline, stage of research, etc. However, an Advisor must be in contact with the student frequently enough to be able to make an informed judgement on the student's progress on a semesterly basis.
5. Thoroughly examining written material submitted by the student, making constructive suggestions for improvement and informing the student of the approximate time it will take for submitted written material to be returned with comments. Normally, comments should be returned to the student within two weeks, although circumstances such as absences from campus or unusually heavy workload may require that the Advisor take longer than two weeks to review the student's work. Timing of submission and review should be negotiated between student and Advisor.
6. Advising the student as to the acceptability of the draft thesis or research project prior to submission to the Advisory Committee. If the Advisor believes the thesis or research project is not ready for submission or will not be ready within a particular time, the Advisor should so indicate with written reasons to the student. In cooperation with the Chair or Departmental Graduate Program Coordinator, the Advisor will help to organize qualifying and final examinations.
7. Assisting the student in learning about all appropriate deadline dates and regulations associated with thesis review, examination and submission, as specified in the Graduate Calendar and/or by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and/or the Department or School.
8. Giving ample notice of extended absences from campus such as research leaves, and making satisfactory arrangements for the advising of the student when the Advisor is on leave or on extended absence from the campus. Where a faculty member knows that they will be on leave for part of a student's program prior to the start of the program, the student should be informed of this at the outset. Depending on the length of absence and the stage of the student's program, it may be necessary to make arrangements for an interim Advisor.
9. Making reasonable arrangements, within the norms appropriate to the discipline and the limits of the material and human resources of the University, so that the research resources necessary for execution of the student's thesis or major paper research are available.
10. Advising the student of regulations designed to provide them with a safe environment. These include relevant safety and/or workplace regulations as well as policies designed to protect individual rights and freedoms. The Advisor will alert the student to any personal risks that may be encountered in the course of the research and provide training, guidance and adequate equipment appropriate for those risks.
11. Chairing the Advisory Committee. Responsibilities will include:
 - holding regular Advisory Committee meetings with the student, normally no less than once per semester
 - submitting evaluation reports every semester, when required by the program of study, in consultation with and signed by the Advisory Committee, to the Departmental Graduate Program Committee and the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
 - formulating a written plan of action with the student and the Advisory Committee to address any problems that have been identified as a result of a semester progress review, and
 - when a semester progress rating of "Some Concerns" or "Unsatisfactory Progress" has been assigned, providing written

notification, including the signatures of all Advisory Committee members, to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.¹

12. Complying with any commitment of financial support made to the student as part of the offer of admission. In the event that expected financial support becomes unavailable, the Advisor will work with the Department and the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies to ensure support for the student.
13. Acknowledging, in accordance with University policies, the contributions of the student in presentations and in published material, for instance through joint authorship.
14. Immediately disclosing to the Department Chair any conflict of interest that arises with the student. Conflicts of interest will arise when there are sexual, romantic, or familial ties between the Advisor and student or when there are irreconcilable interpersonal conflicts, and in such cases it is expected that the faculty member will withdraw from the role of Advisor. Conflicts of interest may also arise when:
 - a. the Advisor or student have a financial interest in the outcome of a research project (in these cases, the decision as to whether withdrawal is appropriate should be made in consultation with the Department Chair) and
 - b. the Advisor is the instructor of a graduate course in which their student(s) is/are the sole registrant(s) (in these cases, the Department Chair (or designate) should ensure that work for grading is also evaluated by a second Graduate Faculty member with appropriate expertise.)

¹ A "satisfactory" evaluation represents normal progress on course work and research. A "some concerns" report is compatible with an expectation for successful completion of the program, but indicates some specific concerns regarding the student's current performance and/or progress on course work or research or both. An "unsatisfactory" report is a clear indication of concern about the student's ability to complete the program. Such concern may be based on poor performance in course work or research or both. Unsatisfactory progress could include failure to meet agreed research milestones, including the timely preparation of a research proposal.

Responsibilities of Advisory Committees

Members of an Advisory Committee can do much to enhance the academic experience for a student, allowing the student to take advantage of a range of expertise in the discipline. The specific responsibilities of an effective Advisory Committee are as follows:

1. Encourage the student's intellectual growth to become a competent contributor to a field of knowledge. In this context, the Advisory Committee must provide constructive criticism and provocative discussion of the student's ideas as the program develops. The Committee should ensure that the student is exposed to a wider range of expertise and ideas than can be provided by the Advisor alone, including directing the student as appropriate to consult with experts outside the Committee.
2. Be reasonably accessible to the student for consultation and discussion of the student's academic progress and research problems.
3. Attend regular meetings of the Advisory Committee with the student, normally no less than once per semester.
4. Develop, with the student's involvement, and formally approve a list of courses that would constitute the program of study, no later than

the 20th class day of the second semester. (This program of study is not considered final until also approved by the Department and the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Such approval will not normally be withheld if the proposed program meets the published program requirements.)

5. In consultation with the Advisor, confirm and approve progress reports every semester.
6. Formulate a plan of action with the student to address any problems that have been identified as a result of a semester progress review of "Some Concerns" or "Unsatisfactory".
7. Inform the student of the approximate time it will take for submitted written material to be returned with comments. If the expected time exceeds the normal two-week turnaround, for instance because of absence from campus or an unusually heavy workload, provide the student and the Advisor with an estimate of the time required.
8. Thoroughly review and comment on drafts of written material. The student should be informed whether or not a research project is complete or a thesis is ready for submission to the final Examination Committee. If additional work is required, feedback should be provided to guide the student to satisfactory completion of the work.
9. Immediately disclose to the Advisor and the Department Chair any conflict of interest that arises with the student. Conflicts of interest will arise when there are sexual, romantic, or familial ties between the Advisory Committee member and the student or when there are irreconcilable interpersonal conflicts, and in such cases it is expected that the faculty member will withdraw from the Advisory Committee. Conflicts of interest may also arise when the Advisory Committee member or student have a financial interest in the outcome of the research project. In these cases, the decision as to whether withdrawal is appropriate should be made in consultation with the Department Chair and the Advisor.

Departmental Responsibilities

The development and maintenance of a high-quality graduate program is of key importance to every department in the Faculty of Graduate Studies. It is, therefore, in each Department's best interest to encourage and support effective graduate advising.

The responsibilities of the Department may be assigned by the Chair in whole or in part to the Graduate Program Coordinator and shared by the Graduate Program Committee. If such a designation of responsibilities occurs, that division of responsibilities should be clearly outlined and publicly available. In the case where the Graduate Program Coordinator is the faculty advisor, the responsibilities of the Graduate Program Coordinator with respect to departmental advising duties will be carried out by the Chair or their designate. Where the Chair is the faculty advisor, their Departmental Responsibilities with respect to advising will be carried out by the Graduate Program Coordinator or their designate. The Department should:

1. Assist the Advisor and student in determining appropriate deadline dates and regulations associated with review, examination and submission of the thesis or research project as specified in the Graduate Calendar and/or the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and the Department or School.
2. Make available to faculty and students information about current courses, areas of expertise of faculty members, and pertinent information not already outlined in the Graduate Calendar. This information may be available through the Department website, graduate handbook or occasional flyers.

3. Ensure that a Co-Instructor is assigned to a graduate course (eg. "reading" course) in situations where the Instructor is also the Advisor to the only student(s) registered.
4. Set up procedures that match students and advisors, with the matching to be completed as quickly as possible, not later than within six months of initial registration.
5. Approve the advisory committee/graduate degree program form no later than the 20th class day of the student's second registered semester.
6. Establish procedures by which the Graduate Program Coordinator and, if appropriate, the Graduate Program Committee can monitor progress of graduate students through reports by the Advisor, student, and appropriate others, and to communicate this progress to all involved parties.
7. Investigate situations where an Advisory Committee has not met for two or more consecutive semesters. In addition, investigate perceived irregularities in student/Advisor/Advisory Committee relationships.
8. If a student has received an unsatisfactory evaluation report for two consecutive semesters then the Departmental Graduate Program Coordinator will meet with the student, the Advisor and the Advisory Committee to consider the lack of progress and any possible remedial measures.
9. Maintain a list of scheduled faculty leaves and, where warranted, assist in making satisfactory arrangements for the advising of the student when the Advisor is on leave or on extended absence from the campus. Depending on the length of absence, it may be necessary to make arrangements for an interim Advisor.
10. Encourage the interaction of graduate students with other students and faculty, and the development of a professional identity through research seminars, posting of conferences, and other means.
11. Inform the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies should there be unresolved concerns about either the Advisor's effectiveness or the student's performance.
12. Allow students to change Advisors if their research interests shift or develop in a new direction and if the change reasonably can be accommodated by the Department.
13. In the event that an Advisor or Advisory Committee member withdraws because of a conflict of interest, work with all parties to mitigate any negative consequences of the withdrawal.
3. Recognize that thesis and research project topics must be within the scope of the appraised and approved graduate program as set out in the program descriptions in the Graduate Calendar.
4. Choose, with the approval of the Advisor and Advisory Committee, a topic of research for which adequate resources are available, including financial and physical resources and faculty expertise.
5. Conform to University, Faculty and Program requirements, academic standards, and guidelines including those related to deadlines, thesis or research project style, course requirements, intellectual property, academic integrity and any relevant safety and/or workplace regulations.
6. Produce a thesis or research project that is the student's own work and that meets the University and Department standards for style and quality, and reflects a capacity for independent scholarship in the discipline.
7. Recognize that the Advisor and members of the Advisory Committee have other educational, research and service obligations that may preclude prompt responses to the graduate student. It is expected, however, that the approximate time for submitted written material to be returned with comments is usually two weeks.
8. Consider and respond to advice and constructive criticism provided by the Advisor or members of the Advisory Committee.
9. Meet or communicate regularly with the Advisor (or designate). The frequency and timing of meetings will depend on the nature of the research being undertaken and the stage in the student's program. However, meetings should be of sufficient frequency that the Advisor can make an adequate assessment of the student's progress each semester and the student receives timely feedback on what is being done well and where improvement is needed. The student should also interact with individual Advisory Committee members and other faculty as appropriate and meet with the Advisory Committee, normally no less than once per semester, to review progress.
10. On a regular basis, make available to the Advisor all original research materials, retaining a copy where appropriate.
11. Be prepared to approach first the Advisor and then the Graduate Program Coordinator or Chair with any perceived problems or changes in circumstances that could affect performance. If circumstances warrant, students may wish to consider a leave of absence on compassionate grounds. Information about this may be obtained from the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies or from the departmental Graduate Program Coordinator.
12. Submit, with specific reasons, any request for the replacement of an Advisor or member of the Advisory or Examining Committee to the Departmental Graduate Program Coordinator should a personal or professional conflict arise. Students should take immediate steps to change their Advisor or a member of their Advisory Committee in cases where an appropriate academic relationship cannot be maintained. In most circumstances, the first step would be to meet with the Graduate Program Coordinator.
13. Recognize that changing Advisors after program entry may have consequences in terms of the nature and focus of an appropriate research topic, and may alter funding planned prior to the change from the initial Advisor as outlined in the Department's letter of funding.
14. Recognize that the student may be obliged to satisfy specific performance requirements that were agreed to at the time of acceptance to the graduate program. These performance requirements may relate to internal or external funding support that the student receives.

Graduate Student Responsibilities

From the choice of Advisor, choice of research project and through to degree completion, graduate students must recognize that they carry the primary responsibility for their success. The responsibilities assigned to Advisors, Advisory Committees and Departments provide the framework within which students can achieve success. Students should take full advantage of the knowledge and advice that the Advisor and Advisory Committee have to offer and make the effort to keep the lines of communication open. Specifically, each graduate student has a responsibility to:

1. Make a commitment to grow intellectually, in part by fulfilling course requirements as outlined by the Advisory Committee, and to contribute to a field of knowledge by developing and carrying out a program of research.
2. Learn about all appropriate deadline dates and regulations associated with registration, award applications and graduation requirements, as specified in the Graduate Calendar and/or the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and/or the Department or School.

15. Recognize that progress will be evaluated every semester by the Advisor and Advisory Committee, and reported to the Program and to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (with Flowchart)

Regardless of the best intentions of all involved, conflict can arise in the course of graduate studies. Depending on the type of conflict and the issues involved, different resolution mechanisms will be appropriate. Four types of conflict can arise in the course of graduate studies. These are:

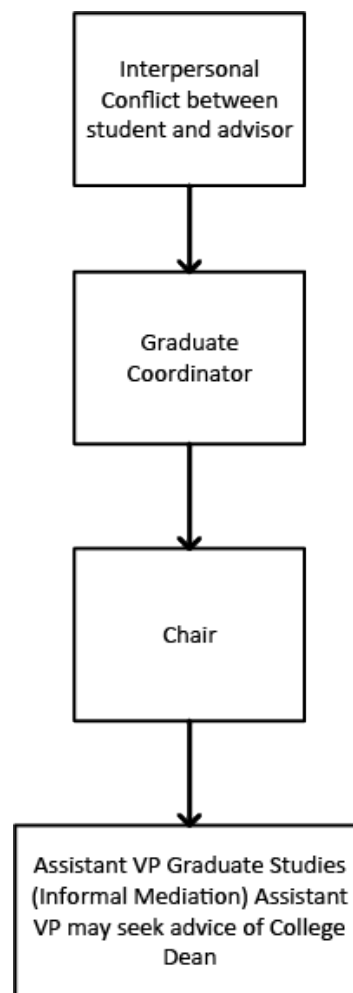
1. Interpersonal conflict between the student and the advisor.
2. Dispute about evaluation of progress, qualifying or oral examination; includes procedural irregularity.
3. Disruptive, abusive, or destructive behaviour on the part of the advisor.
4. Disruptive, abusive, or destructive behaviour on the part of the student.

Following is a brief summary of the various conflict resolution processes currently in place at the University and based upon current policies. Complainants, responding administrators or committees who believe they have or are dealing with a human rights complaint may, at any time, consult the University's Human Rights Policy and the Human Rights and Equity Office. The attached flow chart provides a visual representation of the various processes.

Interpersonal Conflict Between the Student and the Advisor

As in any other domain of human endeavour, conflict can arise between the student and Advisor simply because of differences in personality, communication style, or unspoken expectations. In many cases, such conflict can be resolved through improved communication, but occasionally the situation deteriorates to the point where external mediation is required. The proposed dispute resolution mechanism is consistent with other University policies, emphasizing action first at the local level. The initial complaint should be brought to the attention of the Graduate Program Coordinator, but if that individual is unable to resolve the dispute the Chair should become involved. If the Chair cannot resolve the matter, the Chair should inform the Assistant Vice-President (Graduate Studies) who, in consultation with the College Dean, will provide informal mediation.

[Flowchart indicating the following: Interpersonal Conflict between the student and the advisor should be brought to the Graduate Coordinator and then to the Chair if the dispute cannot be resolved. If the Chair cannot resolve the dispute it should be taken to the Assistant VP Graduate Studies who will in consultation with the College Dean provide informal mediation.]

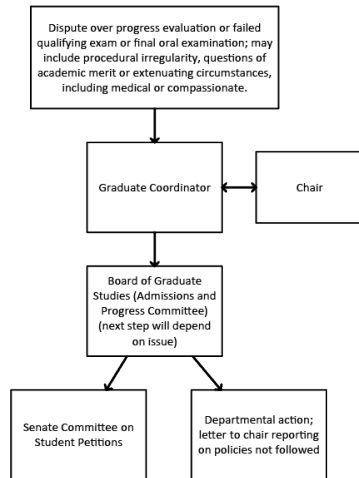


Dispute About Evaluation of Progress, Qualifying or Oral Examination (Includes Procedural Irregularity)

Disputes may arise regarding the quality of a student's work or the procedures used to assess this work. For example, there may be disagreement about the outcome of a failed qualifying examination or final oral examination. There may also be disagreement over the methods of assessing academic work or evaluating progress, including the means used to accommodate a student's disability or special circumstances. These disputes should first be brought to the attention of the Graduate Program Coordinator who may also consult the Chair. If the matter cannot be resolved at the departmental level, and/or the Department is unsure about options for resolution, the case should be referred to the Admissions & Progress Committee of the Board of Graduate Studies. The Committee will issue a ruling on the case to the Department, and may require specified action. Such action may include a requirement to seek independent evaluation by one or more internal or external assessors of the student's work. If the Admission and Progress Committee upholds the Departmental decision, and the student wishes to make the case that the methods and criteria used by the Department did not conform to procedures established by Senate, the student may appeal the decision to the Senate Committee on Student Petitions within 10 working days.

[Flow chart indicating the following: Disputes over progress evaluation, failed qualifying exams or final oral examination; may include procedural irregularity, questions of academic merit or extenuating circumstances, including medical or compassionate should be brought to the Graduate Coordinator who may consult the Chair. If the matter cannot be resolved,

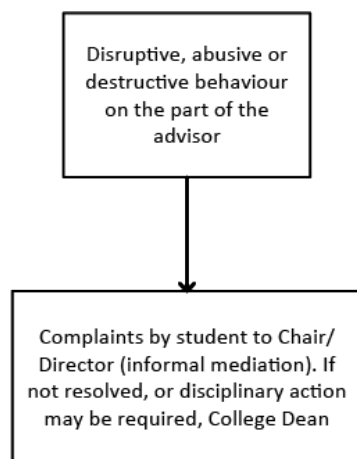
the case should be referred to the Admission and Progress Committee of the Board of Graduate Studies. The committee will issue a ruling which may require action by the department. If the Admission and Progress Committee upholds the departmental decision and the student wishes to appeal the decision, they must submit an appeal to the Senate Committee on Student Petitions within 10 working days.]



Disruptive, Abusive or Destructive Behaviour on the Part of the Advisor

Disruptive, abusive, and destructive behaviour on the part of the Advisor is unacceptable in a scholarly environment. Investigation and remediation of such cases will be as per the Collective Agreement (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/facultyjobs/collectiveagreementapr262010.pdf>) between the University and University of Guelph Faculty Association.

[Flowchart indicating the following: Complaints of disruptive, abusive or destructive behavior on the part of the advisor should be made by the student to the Chair/Director and if not resolved by require mediation by the College Dean.]



Disruptive, Abusive, or Destructive Behaviour on the Part of the Student

Disruptive, abusive, and destructive behaviour on the part of the student is also unacceptable in a scholarly environment. The University's Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy, which is stated in the Graduate Calendar, lists a number of offences against individuals and property. Advisors, fellow students, or other faculty may register an informal

complaint about a student's behaviour with the Graduate Program Coordinator or Chair, who will attempt to resolve the matter. The Graduate Program Coordinator/Chair may also choose to involve the Assistant Vice-President (Graduate Studies) in attempting to reach a resolution. If the Graduate Program Coordinator, in consultation with the Chair and/or Dean, is unable to resolve the matter, a formal complaint should be made, normally to Security Services, who take carriage of the complaint through the University's Judicial Process.

[Flowchart indicating the following: Complaints of disruptive, abusive or destructive behavior on the part of the student should be made to the Graduate Coordinator or Chair, who may choose to involve the Assistant VP Graduate Studies. If the matter remains unresolved a complaint should be made to Security Services, who will take carriage of the complaint through the University's Judicial Process.]

