Graduate Student – Advisor Resource for Discussing Important Topics and Setting Mutual Expectations

This resource aims to provide a starting point for discussing important topics and mutual expectations between a graduate student and an advisor, and largely pertains to graduate programs where there is a research component.

Graduate study requires independent learning and individualized professional development, supported by collaboration and consultation with an advisor. Graduate students hold the primary responsibility for the proper conduct of their research and the completion of their degree requirements. Graduate advisors advise and mentor their graduate students, as well as oversee academic progression throughout the graduate degree.

Advisors are committed to the education and mentorship of the graduate student. As such, regular, constructive interaction between the graduate student and the advisor supports successful degree completion. Establishing mutual expectations and revisiting these expectations regularly will facilitate graduate student success.

Please note this resource is meant as ***a guide*** to facilitate discussion of important topics and an understanding of the advisor’s and graduate student’s mutual expectations. This resource can help to establish open communication between the advisor and graduate student, as well as avoid any misunderstandings that might otherwise ensue. This resource can be used by the graduate student and advisor but does not supersede university regulations.

## 1. ACADEMIC PROGRAM AND PROGRESSION

## Program Expectations

We discussed program expectations regarding the following items (where applicable): dissertation, thesis or project, risk and safety expectations, student attendance and presentations in seminars, time management/ juggling priorities, opportunities for teaching and being teaching assistants, labs and practicums.

**Optional Discussion Notes:**

## Research Expectations (for students working in lab or field settings)

We discussed expectations concerning research, including lab and field research. Specifically, the following items were addressed: goals of research, goals of individual student work, space for student, other student supervisees in the lab, time required to be in the lab/field, lab meetings, student’s role concerning data and analysis, training requirements in lab, safety considerations in the lab.

## We discussed the student’s expected trajectory throughout the program, including timely degree completion, the student’s funding, attendance at conferences, plans for paid work and the effects of working on degree completion.

We discussed the ethics approval process, and the need for approval prior to data collection with human or animals.

**Optional Discussion Notes:**

## Feedback for Revisions:

We understand feedback on written and creative work pertinent to the completion of the degree (e.g., dissertation or thesis proposal, dissertation, thesis or major research project, and draft publications) is expected from the advisor, and the advisory committee, where appropriate. The advisor should provide information to the student regarding feedback, such as type of feedback, time needed to provide feedback, and timeline for addressing feedback.

**Optional Discussion Notes:**

## Academic Integrity:

We are familiar with academic misconduct regulations as listed on the University Secretariat policy website. We discussed academic integrity issues such as plagiarism and the misrepresentation of data in presentations, proposals, dissertations, theses or projects, group collaborations, and work for publication, and the consequences of these acts. <https://wlu.ca/about/governance/assets/resources/12.2-student-code-of-conduct.html>

**Optional Discussion Notes:**

## Authorship and Intellectual Property:

We discussed authorship of papers and attendance at conferences (if applicable).

We also discussed intellectual property (IP) matters that may arise during studies, such as authorship in publications, order of authors, ownership of data and research results, and patent rights. Where applicable, IP matters will be discussed before any publication or presentation of the research in which the student has been involved to ensure accreditation of authorship and patentability is not jeopardized.

<https://wlu.ca/about/governance/assets/resources/11.3-ownership-of-student-created-intellectual-property.html>

**Optional Discussion Notes:**

## Professional Development

We discussed the importance of accessing and acquiring professional development skills as these skills are integral to career development. We also discussed taking advantage of opportunities within ASPIRE, WLU’s “professional skills development training program for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows”.

<https://students.wlu.ca/academics/graduate-and-postdoctoral-studies/aspire/index.html>

**Optional Discussion Notes:**

## 2. FACILITATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADVISOR AND STUDENT

## Regular Consultation

We discussed the importance of regular student-advisor meetings to establish roles and expectations, and to obtain feedback on progress. Ground rules we established included: frequency of meetings (set times or as needed), purpose of meetings (e.g., updates of progress, discussion of thesis/major research paper), initiator of meetings, hours of work/week and location of work completion, funding, and leaves of absence (e.g., deaths in family, illness, vacation). We will re-examine expectations, as well as the frequency of meetings based on the stage of the thesis/degree/major paper.

We also discussed the need for regular communication with other faculty members associated with degree completion (e.g., thesis/major research paper committee, TA advisors, members of comprehensive examination committee).

**Optional Discussion Notes:**

## Communication

Communication is key to establishing a good working relationship between an advisor and a graduate student. Part of being a good communicator involves establishing open dialogue between both parties and establishing boundaries regarding the student-advisor relationship, as well as expectations regarding behaviour between both parties.

We discussed the best means of communication (e.g., email, phone, in-person, online), as well as expectations regarding “check ins” by the student with respect to updates or progress in program.

**Optional Discussion Notes:**

## Conflict Resolution:

We discussed the mechanisms for raising any concerns over supervision or other conflicts that may arise.

**Optional Discussion Notes:**

3. USEFUL LINKS

**Graduate Academic Calendar**

<https://students.wlu.ca/academics/calendars-and-policies/academic-calendars/index.html>

**Graduate Student Funding**

<https://students.wlu.ca/registration-and-finances/graduate-funding-and-awards/index.html>

**Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies**

<https://students.wlu.ca/academics/graduate-and-postdoctoral-studies/index.html>

**Academic Appeals**

<https://students.wlu.ca/academics/graduate-and-postdoctoral-studies/academic-appeals/index.html>

**Frequently Used Forms for Graduate Students**

<https://students.wlu.ca/academics/graduate-and-postdoctoral-studies/assets/resources/forms-inventory.html>

**ASPIRE**

<https://students.wlu.ca/academics/graduate-and-postdoctoral-studies/aspire/index.html>

**Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

https://students.wlu.ca/student-life/diversity-and-equity/index.html

**Accessibility**

<https://students.wlu.ca/student-life/accessibility/index.html>

**Health and Wellness**

<https://students.wlu.ca/wellness-and-recreation/health-and-wellness/index.html>

**Registration and Finances**

<https://students.wlu.ca/registration-and-finances/index.html>

**Graduate Students’ Association (GSA)**

<https://www.wlugsa.ca/>

**International Student Support at Laurier International**

<https://students.wlu.ca/student-life/international-student-support/index.html>

**Office of Human Rights and Conflict Management**

<https://students.wlu.ca/wellness-and-recreation/human-rights-and-conflict-management/index.html>

Note: This resource has been adapted from the GSA’s student/advisor checklist.