Toronto Metropolitan University

Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

Student–Supervisor Collaborative Agreement: Expectations, Accountabilities and Responsibilities

Part A: Introduction

This collaborative agreement documents the mutual expectations between a graduate student and their supervisor.

Graduate study involves independent learning and individualized professional development, supported through collaboration and consultation with a supervisor. While graduate students are primarily responsible for conducting their research and fulfilling degree requirements, both students and supervisors contribute to a productive and successful supervisory relationship. Ongoing, positive, and constructive communication is essential to the timely and successful completion of a graduate degree.

Students are expected to comply with all institutional policies, program guidelines, and deadlines. Additional information and relevant links are provided in Appendix A. Supervisors, in turn, are expected to provide guidance, support, and mentorship throughout the student's program.

This document is not a binding agreement or contract. It is, rather, a means of documenting that mutual expectations and obligations of both the graduate student and supervisor have been discussed and agreed upon, as part of a successful collaborative working relationship. This document provides guidance for those discussions and highlights key expectations, accountabilities, and responsibilities within the graduate student-supervisor relationship.

At the outset of the student-supervisor relationship, and at regularly scheduled points throughout the program, the student and supervisor should discuss both the minimum and ideal expectations for completing the degree, using this document as a guide. These expectations should be revisited regularly to assess progress and make adjustments as needed; this is not a one-time conversation. It is recommended that you complete this collaborative agreement at the outset of your collaboration and refer to it, ideally, once a semester, alongside the required Plan of Study review.

The student and supervisor are expected to review and discuss all items listed below. Please check each item to indicate that it has been discussed. This document is an agreement, not a contract; by signing, you acknowledge that the expectations outlined below have been clearly communicated and discussed.

This agreement may be used in conjunction with the Student-Supervisor Guidelines, which set forth clear expectations and responsibilities for students, supervisors, and programs. Please ensure that, in reviewing this agreement, you also review the Guidelines.

Part B: Agreement between the Graduate Student and the Supervisor	
REGULAR CONSULTATION We have discussed the importance of attending regular student-supervisor meetings and supervisory committee meetings as warranted (see Appendix B). Recommendations for discussions: ● Discuss preferences for meeting times, and share any other commitments that may help in scheduling ● Establish a mutually agreed-upon schedule for regular meetings that takes into account both the student's and the supervisor's preferences ● Document preferences for meeting frequency and for when this should be revisited or adjusted ● Discuss the role of the supervisory committee (if applicable) in supporting the thesis work. ● Discuss the formation of the supervisory committee and the timing of supervisory committee meetings	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor
COMMUNICATION We have discussed mutual expectations regarding regular communication, including channels (e.g., text, email, phone). We have also discussed expectations regarding response times and outlined examples of more urgent situations in which timely communication or response is required. Recommendations: ● Discuss communication preferences and modes (email, text, phone calls) ● Establish norms for typical response times ● Clarify any situations in which you expect more timely communication, i.e., urgent or emergent situations.	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor
PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS We have discussed program expectations regarding the following items (where applicable): dissertation, thesis, or project; risk and safety expectations; student attendance and presentations at seminars, labs, studios, and practicums. Recommendations: ● Discuss program-specific timelines and expectations	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor

• Ensure that there is a working knowledge of resources for frequently asked questions about timelines • Ensure that any explicit requirements regarding presence in seminars, labs, studies, etc., are discussed and agreed upon	
ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION We have discussed any academic accommodations required if the student identifies as having a disability, the need to register with the Academic Accommodations Support (AAS) office for resources, and the requirement to provide the accommodation plan to the supervisor. Once an accommodation plan is provided to the supervisor in a timely way, a follow-up discussion will be arranged to revisit expectations and deadlines, and ongoing communication regarding accommodations will be included in regular updates and meetings. See Appendix C below. Recommendations: • Without an explicit requirement to disclose any specific reasons for needing accommodation, ensure that the student has information on how to access the AAS office to explore accommodations, if needed. • When an accommodation plan is in place, ensure that there is an understanding of expectations for timely communication should anything arise that may result in changes in the plan.	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor
USE OF GENERATIVE AI We have discussed expectations about the potential use of generative AI tools in all aspects of research, in the achievement of milestones, and in all written and creative work. Any additional questions regarding the potential integration or use of generative AI tools should be discussed as they arise, on an ongoing basis. The supervisory committee should also be involved in these discussions regarding clear expectations regarding whether and how generative AI tools may be used in any aspect of the graduate student's work. See Appendix D for more details. Recommendations: • Ensure that you have a shared understanding of the use of relevant generative AI tools through discussion and documentation of the discussion. • For initial discussions, cover the use of generative AI tools in the beginning aspects of developing research projects, including brainstorming and writing proposals • Ensure that the YSGPS Guidance on the Use of GAI in Graduate Studies is reviewed and discussed. • Consider using a tool such as the Conversation Guide on page 5 of the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies Artificial Intelligence: Considerations for Graduate Research to guide your discussion of	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor

AI use	
RESEARCH ETHICS We are aware that consultation with the REB regarding the need for ethics review and approval is required before any research may begin when human or animal participants are involved. Consultation with the REB is also required for any research involving controlled goods or hazardous materials. For more information, please see Appendix E below. Recommendations: ● Ensure understanding of this requirement at the outset, as well as understanding of when ethics review might be sought, and how this might affect timelines of research ● Continue to revisit this requirement regularly as the methodology is clarified and the proposal is developed ● Ensure that sufficient time is allotted for consultation with the REB on the need for REB review, or review by the Animal Care Committee of St Michaels Unity Health (who oversee the review and approval processes for all research involving animals at TMU), or for assessment and approval processes tied to the use of controlled goods or hazardous materials in research.	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor
FEEDBACK FOR REVISIONS We understand that feedback on written and creative work (such as a dissertation or thesis proposal, dissertation, thesis or major research project, and draft publications) is expected from the supervisor and supervisory committee, where appropriate. Feedback should be provided in a timely manner and in accordance with mutually agreed-upon expectations. Recommendations: ● Share preferences for both giving and receiving feedback ● Revisit this once there are more opportunities for providing feedback, to adjust and revise ● Ensure that this includes a discussion of generative AI technology use on drafts and work in progress	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor
RESEARCH PROGRESS We are aware of the need to document progress in non-course requirements through completion of the Plan of Study and Progress Reports, as well as ongoing discussion. Where applicable, the supervisory committee will be actively consulted in assessing progress. Recommendations: ● Review and discuss the Plan of Study form and the Progress	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor

Review form • Ensure mutual understanding of the processes to complete forms and monitor progress, and outline shared accountabilities	
ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT We are familiar with the academic misconduct policy and the Student Code of Conduct as outlined in the University Senate Academic Integrity Office and the Office of Student Care. We have discussed academic integrity issues, including plagiarism; unauthorized use of AI; misrepresentation of data in presentations, dissertation or thesis proposals or drafts, dissertations, theses, or projects; work for publication; and the consequences of these acts. Recommendations for discussion: • Ensure that there is a mutual understanding of obligations for both the student and supervisor regarding academic misconduct and non-academic misconduct • Ensure that both student and supervisor know about, and share, available resources for questions about misconduct	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor
FUNDING AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT We have discussed the student's sources of funding, including a supervisor stipend (if applicable). The program letter of offer, outlining funding, has been reviewed. We have discussed potential scholarship and award opportunities and the preparation of scholarship and award applications. We have discussed other potential sources of funding, including Academic Assistantship and Research Assistantship opportunities. Finally, we discussed the feasibility of the student's plan to ensure timely degree completion, as part of our discussion of student funding and their plans for paid work. Recommendation for discussion: • There should be a clear discussion of any conditions that accompany any type of funding • Refer to the YSGPS Scholarship and Awards page and any Faculty or program resources for scholarships and awards	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor
AUTHORSHIP & INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY We have discussed the intellectual property (IP) matters that may arise during studies, including authorship in publications, author order, ownership of data and research results, and patent rights. Where applicable, IP matters will be discussed before any publication or presentation of the research to ensure that accreditation of authorship and patentability are not jeopardized. Recommendations for discussion:	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor

• At the outset, ensure that there is a shared understanding of any questions regarding IP and acknowledgement • Refer to Policy 171 and associated FAQs to guide the discussion • Refer also to Policy 56, Section 4 and requests for withholding the publication of a graduate student's thesis or dissertation.	
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT We have discussed the importance of accessing and acquiring professional development skills. Experiences of this nature add value to the student's future career. Recommendations: • Ensure discussion of how to balance seeking professional development opportunities with workload • Develop a shared understanding of what types of professional development opportunities might be most helpful • To guide your discussion, refer to the YSGPS Student Events and Calendar and any Faculty or program event calendars • Ensure both the student and the supervisor are subscribed to GRADNews	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor
STUDENT SUPPORT We have discussed available resources for graduate students, including library resources, writing and learning supports, and other supports, such as Student Care and the Centre for Student Development and Counselling. Recommendations • Refer to the Student Resources page on the YSGPS website. • Refer to the Student Wellness and Housing resources.	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor
CONFLICT RESOLUTION We have discussed the mechanisms for raising any concerns over supervision or other conflicts which may arise. Recommendations: • Ensure that there is a shared understanding of how to address any concerns or conflicts, as well as a shared understanding of the process to revisit and revise this agreement regularly • If concerns arise, we have discussed the importance of communicating them in a timely manner and aim for informal, solution-focused resolution wherever possible. • The student is aware that the Graduate Program Administrator and the Graduate Program Director are good first resources for advice on navigating questions and concerns regarding supervision. • Refer to the YSGPS Student-Supervisor Guidelines for additional	☐ Student ☐ Supervisor

guidance on conflict resolution in the student-supervisor working relationship.	

Part C: Signatures	
The Graduate Student and Supervisor have reviewed and discussed the expectations, accountabilities and responsibilities set forth in this agreement.	
Supervisor (print name):	
Supervisor signature:	Date:
Student name (print name):	Student ID:
Student signature:	Date:

Appendices

Appendix A: YSGPS website and relevant policies and resources

The Yeates School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies website contains considerable valuable information for students and supervisors, such as the Graduate Calendar and Significant Dates. It also includes links to other sites relevant to the graduate student experience. A selection of resources is included below to help guide the discussion of this agreement.

For access to all graduate policies, guidelines and information, please visit the YSGPS website.

Graduate Supervision Guidelines: These guidelines set forth the roles and responsibilities of graduate students, faculty supervisors, programs, and the university.

Thesis, MRP and dissertation submission guidelines: This resource provides information on the preparation and submission of dissertations and theses.

Guideline for Manuscript-Style Master's or Doctoral Theses: This resource provides guidance on manuscript-style theses and compares them with traditional thesis style. Links to program-specific requirements for a manuscript-style thesis are included, where available.

Financing your graduate studies: Tuition, fees and funding: This resource has information on tuition, fees and funding for graduate students, as well as a link to detailed program-specific information.

A SELECTION OF IMPORTANT POLICIES:
Policy 170(b): Graduate Status, Enrolment and Evaluation
Policy 171: Scholarly, Research and Creative (SRC) Intellectual Property Policy
TMU Student Code of Non-Academic Misconduct
Policy 60: Academic Integrity
Policy 51: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Participants

Appendix B: Supervisory Committee

The role of the supervisory committee is to work with supervisors to provide guidance, consultation, and advice on students' research. The composition of the supervisory committee may vary by program; however, the members' areas of expertise generally complement that of the supervisor. The supervisory committee may also be called upon to take a more active role when supervisors are absent for an extended period or in disputes between supervisors and students. For more information, see the Graduate Supervision Guidelines.

Appendix C: Academic Accommodation Support

All students with disabilities are strongly encouraged to register with Academic Accommodations Support services at any time during their studies, to provide them with a holistic individualized accommodation plan to help reduce disability-related barriers and ensure that each student has access to support as well as ongoing opportunities to demonstrate their academic, research and scholarly potential to the fullest. Working with a Student Accommodation Facilitator, an individualized accommodation plan is created. This formalized, official plan facilitates documented and collaborative communication between graduate students and faculty members involved in both coursework and the supervision of students' research. Accommodation of graduate students with disabilities is required in coursework, and also in all areas of their graduate student experience, including non-course requirements, defined in Policy 170(b) as "...including, but not limited to graduate seminars, theses, major research papers, major research projects, comprehensive/candidacy examinations, dissertations, and required certifications". For more information on Academic Accommodations Support services and to register, please visit their website.

Appendix D: The Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Graduate Studies

The use of new Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) technology in graduate student research, scholarship, and creative activities (SRC) raises both opportunities and concerns. Graduate programs and supervisors should provide clear and detailed guidance on what constitutes acceptable engagement with GIA in writing, scholarship and all research and creative activities. This begins with explicit initial discussions between the graduate student and the supervisor regarding GIA in the context of the proposed student SRC activities, with the goal of establishing consensus on the acceptable extent of engagement with GIA across all aspects of graduate student writing and SRC activities. Discussions should also include guidance on the ethical considerations of the use of GAI, and how the use of GAI may be considered alongside other related obligations (for example, in how a graduate student's research participants' data are used or managed). Helpful TMU resources include the YSGPS Guidance on the use of Generative AI in Graduate Studies and the CELT Generative AI Resources document. In addition, the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS) has published a guidance document, Artificial Intelligence: Considerations for Graduate Research, which may be helpful.

Appendix E: Research Ethics

All funded or unfunded research involving humans, animals, or controlled goods undertaken at TMU University facilities and conducted by TMU University faculty, students, and staff is subject to ethics review and approval. The aim of the policies and practices of the Research Ethics Board (REB) at TMU, as noted below, are intended to ensure the protection of human research participants. There are also policies and processes in place to ensure any research involving animals is done in compliance with national standards for animal care. Finally, there are also measures that must be taken if using controlled goods or hazardous materials in research. Each of these policies also serves to protect the researcher (whether they are a faculty member, graduate student, or staff), the university, and the public.

The TMU REB is the first point of contact for inquiries regarding research of all three kinds, described here (i.e., involving human participants, data or biological materials, involving animals, or involving controlled goods or hazardous materials). ***It is most important that consultation with the REB be done before any research begins***.

Research at TMU involving humans, their data, or their biological materials, must be reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB) *prior to starting the research*. It is important that graduate students who are aiming to involve human participants in research, consult – in collaboration with their supervisor – with the REB as early as possible, to determine if REB review and approval are needed for their project. The REB provides guidance on what types of activities require review and approval, and if there is any uncertainty about whether a graduate student's research requires REB review and approval, consultation with the REB as early as possible is important.

For research involving animals, TMU has an agreement with St Michaels Unity Health Animal Care Committee, which oversees all such research here at TMU. Instructions and more information on the process are provided here.

Use of hazardous or controlled goods in research also requires oversight, and consultation must be carried out before initiating research, to determine whether a security assessment is required. More information can be found here.

It is important to remember that, in all cases, research may not begin before all University approvals/certifications, institutional requirements, or authorizations are obtained. For more information, please see the TMU REB website