McMaster University

School of Graduate Studies

1280 Main Street West
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Phone 905.525.9140
Ext. 23679
http://graduate.mcmaster.ca

To : Members of Graduate Council

From : Christina Bryce
Assistant Graduate Secretary

The next meeting of Graduate Council will be held on **Tuesday June 9th at 9:30 am via Zoom.**

Listed below are the agenda items for discussion.

Please email *cbryce@mcmaster.ca* if you are unable to attend the meeting.

A G E N D A

I. **Minutes of the meeting of May 19th, 2020**
II. **Business arising**
III. **Report from the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies**
IV. **Report from the Graduate Associate Deans**
V. **Report from the Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary**
VI. **Student Supervisor Working Group Update**

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Tuesday May 19th at 9:30 am via Zoom

Present: Dr. D. Welch (Chair), Dr. K. Hassanein, Dr. J. Gillett, Dr. M. Thompson, Dr. B. Gupta, Dr. S. Hanna, Dr. M. Horn, Dr. N. McLaughlin, Mr. D. Cursio, Dr. F. McNeill, Dr. I. Bruce, Dr. J.P. Xu, Dr. J. Shedden, Dr. J. West-Mays, Ms. J. de Lange, Dr. C. Kwan, Mr. L. Greville, Dr. M.-A. Letendre, Mr. M. Lighstone, Dr. S. Raha, Dr. L. Thabane, Dr. S. Bannerman, Dr. L. Chan, Dr. S. Pope, Dr. N. Tan, Mr. M. Javdan, Dr. D. Mountainm Ms. S. Baschiera (Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary), Ms. C. Bryce (Assistant Graduate Secretary),

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I. Minutes of the meeting of April 21st, 2020

It was duly moved and seconded, **'that Graduate Council approve the minutes of the meeting of April 21st, with the correction to attendance noted.'**
The motion was **carried**.

II. Business arising

There was no business arising.

III. Report from the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Dr. Welch reported on the following items:

- Plans for the fall semester, noting that he expected the announcement of the plan for the term would be partially or fully online soon;
- A phased return to research on campus (expected to begin on June 1st) including the work of an advisory committee to ensure that the attempt to restart in-person research on campus is consistent with emergency legislation and the guidance from public health;
- Continued success with online Ph.D. defences;
- Limited uptake on the Winter 2020 grade change options;
- The associate deans work within their faculties to help put in place assistance to enable people to complete their degrees as planned;
- The Canadian emergency student benefit;
- The McMaster emergency fund, administered by the Student Aid Office;
- Access has been obtained to the Hathi Trust Digital Collection which will primarily benefit Humanities and Social Science students to complete research online;
- Faculty-specific letters addressing concerns related to covid-19 had been circulated or were in the process of being prepared, students with cases not covered by the letters should contact the relevant associate dean;
- Uncertainty around international student arrivals, noting that a survey was in progress from the International Office and that the institution is waiting on the decision from the federal government.

In response to a question about potential concerns around public transit use, Dr. Welch noted that in this current phase of return to research, students can decide they do not want to risk a return to campus.

Council members discussed the emergency student benefit, including the potential to be required to show that they were actively looking for work.

Council members discussed the issue of international student arrival. One member relayed the experience within his program, noting that there were two students who had received their student permits before the cut-off and one was able to come and the other was not. He reported a lot of back and forth on the letters required, that the question of in-person activities seemed particularly important and suggested that a template letter be developed to help offset administrative challenges if this is required for every international student.

IV. Report from the Graduate Associate Deans

Dr. Gillett (Faculty of Social Sciences) reported on the following items:

- The near-complete Faculty letter for social science students related to covid-19 assistance;
- A successful review for the proposed Master of Public Policy, noting they are now waiting for the report from reviewers.

Dr. Gupta (Faculty of Science) reported on the following items:

- Defences, committee meetings are happening with no issues that he was aware of;
- Faculty memo had been released, including a financial support request form.

Dr. Thompson (Faculty of Engineering) reported on the following items:

- The approval of the Microcredential Academy, noting some work still to be done, particularly around fees;
- Meeting with Urkind (the preferred choice for research plagiarism checking software) and folks from the MacPherson Institute, regarding the implementation of the software, noting that it looks like it will be incorporated into Avenue to Learn for the moment.

Dr. Hassanein (Faculty of Business) reported on the following items:

- Work on the Covid-19 Faculty letter to students;
- Planning around admissions and upcoming terms, including return to campus;
- A plan for assessing the completion of learning goals and objectives for the Business Ph.D. program.

Dr. Horn (Faculty of Humanities) reported on the following items:

- Covid-19 Faculty letter to graduate students had been released and there has been relatively little feedback so far;
- Concern about ensuring that one-year course-based M.A. students are on track to complete by August;
- Information from the return to campus committee, including room capacity arrangements required for social distancing.

Dr. Hanna (Faculty of Health Sciences) reported on the following items:

- Graduate program leadership updates within the Faculty, noting a change for Neuroscience and Occupational Therapy as well as a re-appointment in Medical Sciences;
- A successful online IQAP review for Health Science Education and plans for rescheduling the reviews that were cancelled, with hopes for desk audits during the summer;
- The Covid-19 Faculty memo to students had been released and, related to this, the need to sort out arrangements for interdisciplinary programs;

- Preparation in programs to be online in the fall.

V. Report from the Associate Registrar and Graduate Secretary

Ms. Baschiera reported on the following items:

- Winter 2020 Grade Change uptake;
- Stabilizing enrollment for government count;
- Online convocation ceremonies;
- The expectation that there will be more uptake on the general bursary in the fall and work with the Scholarships team to plan for this;
- Training on the new forms system bolt-on, noting that the hope is that eventually some forms will automatically update in the system;
- The first virtual town hall for program staff.

VI. Faculty of Engineering Graduate Curriculum and Policy Committee Update

Dr. Thompson explained that the School of Engineering Practice and Technology won't be able to implement the previously-approved changes to program length for their September 2020 cohort and are instead going to wait until January 2021.

VII. Spring 2020 Graduands

It was duly moved and seconded, **'that Graduate Council approve the list of the 2020 Spring Graduands, with amendments/corrections to be made as necessary by the Associate Graduate Registrar.'**

The motion was **carried**.

VIII. New Scholarships

It was duly moved and seconded, **'that Graduate Council approve the new scholarships as set out in the document.'**

The motion was **carried**.

IX. Graduate Calendar Working Group Update

Dr. Thompson provided a brief update, noting the intention of the group was to improve and streamline the calendar, including removing redundancies and refresh information as required. The work is being done in conjunction with the Secretariat's office to ensure the calendar is compliant with existing policies. The whole document has been reviewed and now the plan is to reorganize headers, condensing sections as appropriate and ultimately present something that is easier to use.

Graduate Student Supervisor Relationships at McMaster University

2019-2020 Working Group on Student Supervisor Relationships

This document contains the ongoing mandates of the student supervisor relationships working group within Graduate Council which have been developed and advanced over the last two years. The aim is to consolidate the recommendations of the committee so that their evolution can be surveyed by members of Graduate Council at any time, in a single document. Furthermore, this document can serve as a source of content to populate a consolidated section on the SGS website focusing on student supervisor relationship considerations, strategies, and resources. The individual contributions of the pan-University committee are recognized in Appendix I. While membership was solicited from across campus, the committee does recognize that there are gaps in certain disciplines and every effort will be made in future reflections to appropriate consider those programs. Please note that the complete report from the 2018-2019 committee is included in Appendix III.

Committee Mandates

1. Explore a broad spectrum of strains placed on student-supervisor relationships with a view to identifying resources to building healthy relationships right from start. It is not the aim of the committee to catalog a long list of grievances.
2. The committee wishes to encourage students not to be intimidated by their supervisors, but to build healthy relationships from the initial meeting with an understanding of expectations; both from their supervisors and themselves.
3. The committee wants to encourage supervisors to be clear and fair in their expectations of students and ensure that students have easy access to positive mentorship strategies.
4. There are a number of different groups on campus that are already addressing many of these issues. The working group would like to consolidate this information and present it to the University community through an SGS portal. These include websites, which require minimal resources, as well as more resource intensive strategies such as workshops/one-on-one counselling. The committee will provide a range of strategies that can be phased in over a number of years as resources become available. In general, the committee wishes to encourage SGS to promote positive relationship building through a broad range of engagement strategies from the initial stages of the student/supervisor dyad.
5. In consultation with the students and faculty across campus, the committee will identify additional approaches to effectively make resources accessible to all.

Identified scope of challenges faced by both students and faculty

The committee identified and discussed a number of general issues witnessed throughout the McMaster campus. These issues are not discipline specific and their mitigation will require a multifaceted approach implemented over time. One of the limitations of this list is that the

working group does not have balanced representation from members in all faculties. One of the goals of SGS and the committee should be to rectify this and ensure at least one faculty member and one student represent each Faculty.

1. Students start programs with unrealistic expectations of project outcomes/design. Their vision of the project does not align with that of the supervisor.
2. In some cases, students are not prepared to drive the project with their own initiatives. They are waiting on guidance from the supervisor at all steps. Strategies to increase the awareness of tools and strategies that can help the student deal with changing pressures and cultural perceptions of the student/supervisor relationship would be helpful. It will be important to underscore that graduate student experience is significantly different from the undergraduate experience in this regard.
3. Since most supervisors do not receive a great deal of formal training in how to mentor and manage relationship development with trainees prior to starting an academic position, it would be valuable to consolidate, and if necessary, to create tools to facilitate skill development in the areas of (i) initiating strong mentorship relationships; (ii) strategies to promote student growth and the development of project management skills; and (iii) guidelines for how to manage a deteriorating relationship (if that should happen) specifically targeted at faculty.
4. Students may lack sufficient information about program and supervisor expectations at the time of entry into the program. Providing early access to information may be valuable.
5. Faculty of Social Science felt that faculty may be politicizing the relationship with their students, where the philosophical differences between students and faculty become an area of tension. This may not be as much of an issue in the STEM faculties. It was clear that such differences in programs will require "fine tuning" of the outreach to each program/Faculty. However, there are enough commonalities in the types of challenges faced by the student/supervisor dyad (ie communication skills, access to mental health resources etc.) that the first steps taken should focus on these.
6. Students encounter major life events that can impede or delay academic progress (family care responsibilities, illness, acquisition of a disability or episodic/chronic conditions, bereavement, financial strain, housing instability, legal issues, violence, discrimination/harassment, parental leave, etc). This in turn can strain the student-supervisor relationship.

Primary Recommendation of the Working Group (2019-2020)

Primary Accomplishments:

1. ***A survey of students and faculty*** assessing knowledge of resources to facilitate the student supervisor relationship. Credits for the development, implementation of the survey are indicated below:

   Survey design and draft questionnaire was reviewed by and received feedback from:
   SGS (Doug Welch, Stephanie Baschiera, Christina Bryce, Francesca Hernandez, Kevin Boccia. Judi Pattison)
   Grad Council Committee Chair (Sandy Raha)

AVP Faculty (Kimberly Dej, Jill Axisa)
PhD Alumna and Instructor, Faculty of Social Sciences: Allyson Ion
Graduate Students Association (Shawn Hercules, Ashley Ravenscroft)
MacPherson Institute (Kris Knorr, Erin Allard)
McMaster Research Ethics Office (reviewed and gave feedback on survey design and questions but was not submitted to MREB as a research project as it falls under Quality Assurance)

Primary Coding & Analysis:
Chelsea Whitwell and Andrea Cole. Further analysis may be pending by McPherson student partners (June 2020)

2. The establishment of student ***peer mentorship groups*** across campus. With leadership provided by Eric DesJardins (Medical Sciences), Swapna Krishnamurthy (PNB) and Sam Peters (Engineering-from 2018/19) the committee recommended that program specific mentorship groups facilitate information awareness and discussions amongst their local constituencies.
3. The working group also considered bringing ***good mentorship practices to faculty*** through the offices of the AVP faculty.
4. The committee also recommended that some specific issues surrounding communication which impact graduate students were worth including, either through website content or in seminars and workshops. Led by Lucas Grevile (PNB) and Claudia Sikorski (HRM), this specific content included topics such as how to manage your workspace meeting etiquette how to handle mentor feedback and how to ask for resources.

Needs of the Students and Faculty

Results of a survey sent to graduate students and faculty, during fall 2020, was compiled based on responses from 153 PhD students and 189 supervisors. While the student responses were relatively well distributed between those who were junior and senior, the faculty responses came primarily from more experienced supervisors (greater than 10 years).

a. Clear preference for **seminars and workshops** as means of obtaining information
b. Some people see **money** as the ultimate solution… *Can we do anything about this? Until we identify a path to a solution, because the solution is clearly multivariate, efficiently spending money (even if we had resources) would be challenging.*
c. Students want **oversight** on supervision (monitoring, reporting, assessment)
d. Students want **templates** for students on PhD development & Supervisory relationship health
e. Supervisors want **peer support** for themselves on how to **mentor effectively**
f. Supervisors want **mental health** resources for their students

Student Peer Mentorship Network

The purpose of developing peer-mentorship networks is to offload and dissipate stress within student-supervisor relationships. By pairing new students with upper year mentors, mentees can

seek peer support for common obstacles that arise in graduate school, including challenges in the student-supervisor relationships. Such programs have been instituted, in part, in Medical Sciences, Psychology Neuroscience and Behaviour as well as Engineering.

The committee considered forming centralized vs more localized networks within each program. Since each graduate program has different characteristics, dynamics, experiences and needs, *it is recommended to focus on developing localized peer-mentorship networks across graduate programs with the goal of developing a centralized network over time*. The success of localized mentorship groups will require students from each graduate program to lead this initiative. Although localized peer networks will aim to meet the specialized needs of each program, the foundation of each network can be built on four central pillars that generalize across all graduate programs:

1. ***Cohesion***: creating a sense of cohesion among the graduate student body
2. ***Support*:** offering support for common challenges encountered in graduate school
3. ***Anonymity*:** offering anonymous peer support outside of lab or supervisory dynamics
4. ***Wisdom*:** learning from the experience of others, including senior students, alumni, post-doctoral fellows, etc.

Like a seesaw, the acronym ***C-SAW*** symbolizes the give and take required from both sides of a balanced mentorship relationship. Developing and promoting this kind of framework on the SGS website provides a centralized blueprint for student leaders interested in creating a localized peer mentorship network for their graduate program.

To initiate localized networks across campus, the involvement of Associate Deans and Graduate Chairs to facilitate (and develop strategies to sustainably fund) student-led networks within their departments/programs is encouraged.

Challenges for a sustainable centralized peer mentorship network: Further consideration is necessary to determine how to recruit a pilot cohort of mentors and mentees, who will do the recruiting and when to deploy this information to incoming graduate students. Future directions also include standardizing and incentivizing training for mentors as well as acquiring funding for large-scale training, events and workshops.

Good mentorship practices for faculty

A detailed report of the types of mentorship practices the committee considered, and the rationale for recommendations is provided in Appendix II. A brief summary of the recommendations is provided below.

1. That a faculty training workshop be developed with Jill Axisa, Director for Faculty Leadership & Development, for the 2020-21 academic year. This workshop would be based on the "Graduate Supervision Workshop" held on Friday, February 28, 2020. The topics covered in that workshop included setting expectations, motivating students,

communicating clearly, and navigating issues/concerns. These aspects of supervision fall primarily within the "Master and Advisor" role of the supervisor (see Appendix III). In the planned workshop for the coming year, the focus will be expanded to include more aspects of the Supporter and Sponsor roles of the supervisor. The working group believes that with increasing concerns about mental health issues and career prospects for graduate students, supervisors need specific training in these areas. Given the success of this year's workshop, we recommend that the panelists (Drs. Todd Hoare in Chemical Engineering, Karin Humphreys in Psychology, Neuroscience & Behaviour, Mary Silcox in English & Cultural Studies, and Arthur Sweetman in Economics) be invited to participate once again. It would also be beneficial to recruit a panelist from the Faculty of Health Sciences to incorporate their perspectives; perhaps someone from the clinical sciences and someone from the laboratory-based sciences.

2. We recognize that there may be some discipline-specific issues in mentorship raised in this planned campus-wide workshop that might require further discussion among faculty working in that discipline. Therefore, we suggest that the participants of the proposed workshop be surveyed afterward, and if discipline-specific issues are indeed identified, then subsequent workshops to discuss those issues be organized.
3. We recognize that there are multiple approaches to achieving good mentorship practices. Our recommendations, summarized in Appendix III, are based on strategies delineated by a number of postsecondary institutions throughout North America. We would recommend making these available on the SGS website for those who would be interested in further explore the variety of approaches and creating their own unique styles.

Empathy and communication between the student/supervisor dyad

Thematically, a recurring topic of discussion was the importance of students and supervisors to adapt to a changing situation/crisis that may evolve during the period of supervision. These considerations included changes to the student's personal life, funding or other resources which may suddenly trigger an elevated level of tension between the student and supervisor. Good communication, including active listening, certainly lies at the heart of resolving these issues. Appropriate resources and development of these skills through more general workshops targeted at all faculty and students is an initial recommendation of the committee. However, it is difficult for the committee to recommend specific courses of action to address the more discipline or individual specific challenges. It will be important to assemble and clearly inform the student population of the availability of resources to address these individual crises through both the SGS website and also SGS 101. Initially, this may be in the form of an inventory of links but over time as we begin to better understand how to utilize this information in case by case scenario, it would be helpful to better contextualize the use of this information through websites, peer mentorship groups and subsequent workshops and seminars.

Final Recommendations for 2019-2020

1. Development of two general workshops, one for faculty (through the office of AVP Faculty) and one for graduate students (with the help of the peer mentorship network) to address some of the general concerns and inform about the availability of resources.
2. Updates to the SGS website to consolidate some of the identified resources for good mentorship and mental health resources, including the Prof. Hippo program (in consultation with appropriate expertise).
3. Incorporation of information regarding the availability of tools and processes already in place for graduate students to seek guidance, counselling, peer support within the SGS 101 course.
4. Continued investment in the working group on Student Supervisor Relationships. The working group recognized that developing quality student/supervisor relationships is a dynamic challenge due to the changing academic and employment environment. The committee recommends that SGS continue to invest effort in monitoring and updating solutions to these issues through the continued efforts of a Graduate Council working group.

Sandeep Raha
Chair
Graduate Council Working Group on Student Supervisor Relationships
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Appendix I

Committee Membership for the Working Group on Student/Supervisor Relationships

Andrea Cole Coordinator, Grad Student Recruitment, Retention and Diversity	2018 – 2020	coleand@mcmaster.ca
Carol Lopez, Master's Student, Social Work	2019 – 2020	lopezrim@mcmaster.ca
Chelsea Whitwell, PhD Student, Humanities	2019 – 2020	whitwelc@mcmaster.ca
Christina Bryce Assistant Graduate Secretary and Synapps Administrator	2018 – 2020	cbryce@mcmaster.ca
Claudia Sikorski, Masters Student, Health Science	2019 – 2020	sikorsc@mcmaster.ca
Eric Desjardins, PhD Student, Health Sciences	2019 – 2020	desjarem@mcmaster.ca
Ian Bruce (Engineering) - Professor and Graduate Associate Chair	2018 – 2020	brucei@mcmaster.ca
Jess Hider, PhD Student, Social Sciences	2019 – 2020	hiderj@mcmaster.ca
Jesse Staats, Master's Student, Humanities	2019 – 2020	staatsj@mcmaster.ca
Lucas Greville, PhD Student, Science	2019 – 2020	grevillj@mcmaster.ca
Magda Stroinska, Chair, Linguistics and Languages, Humanities	2019 – 2020	stroinsk@mcmaster.ca
Netina Tan, Associate Professor, Political Science, Social Sciences	2019 – 2020	netina@mcmaster.ca
Peter Walmsley, Professor, English & Cultural Studies, Humanities	2019 – 2020	walmsley@mcmaster.ca
Sandeep Raha (Health Sciences) Chair, Working Group on Student Supervisor Relationships	2018 – 2020	rahas@mcmaster.ca
Sarah Dickson, Associate Professor, Civil Engineering	2019 – 2020	sdickso@mcmaster.ca
Stephanie Baschiera – Associate Registrar & Graduate Secretary	2018 – 2020	baschie@mcmaster.ca
Swapna Krishnamoorthy, PhD Student, Science	2019 – 2020	krishs6@mcmaster.ca
Thomas Adams, Associate Professor, Chemical Engineering	2019 – 2020	tadams@mcmaster.ca

Appendix II

Training of faculty in graduate student mentorship

After reviewing resources available at McMaster and practices at peer institutions, we recommend the following course of action:

1. That a faculty training workshop be developed with Jill Axisa, Director for Faculty Leadership & Development, for the 2020-21 academic year. This workshop would be based on the "Graduate Supervision Workshop" held on Friday, February 28, 2020. The topics covered in that workshop included setting expectations, motivating students, communicating clearly, and navigating issues/concerns. These aspects of supervision fall primarily within the "Master and advisor" role of the supervisor. In the planned workshop for the coming year, the focus will be expanded to include more aspects of the Supporter and Sponsor roles of the supervisor. The working group believe that with increasing concerns about mental health issues and career prospects for graduate students, supervisors need specific training in these areas. Given the success of this year's workshop, we recommend that the panelists (Drs. Todd Hoare in Chemical Engineering, Karin Humphreys in Psychology, Neuroscience & Behaviour, Mary Silcox in English & Cultural Studies, and Arthur Sweetman in Economics) be invited to participate once again. It would also be beneficial to recruit a panelist from the Faculty of Health Sciences better incorporate their perspectives.
2. We recognize that there may be some discipline-specific issues in mentorship raised in this planned campus-wide workshop that might require further discussion among faculty working in that discipline. Therefore, we suggest that the participants of the proposed workshop be surveyed afterward, and if discipline-specific issues are indeed identified, then subsequent workshops to discuss those issues be organized.

Background Material

Why Mentor?

Mentorship doesn't only benefit the student, it can be good for the supervisor too, e.g. better research because assumptions challenged or new ideas or different perspective, develop professional network, pride in helping to someone to evolve as an academic and person (How to Mentor Grad Students: A Guide for Faculty, 2020; Paglis et al., 2006; Supervising Graduate Students, n.d.), recognize their own strengths, and 'warm fuzzy' feeling of helping someone.

For the student, it's a very important factor to graduate completion, success, and productivity (Council of Graduate Schools, 2009). It helps students get 'access' to opportunities, and is extremely important for their career trajectory and success.

What is a Mentor?

A mentor differs from a supervisor because in addition to guiding the student through the requirements of their academic program, a mentor provides advice and council that is broader (e.g. future career assistance) (Gardner, 2014; Section 2: Supervision and Mentoring, n.d). One may move between more supervisor-like roles versus mentorship-like roles as the student progresses through their degree.

A qualitative view on how this role may change over the tenure of the student with the supervisor is outlined below (Supervising Graduate Students, n.d.; Zelditch, 1990).

- Masters and advisors - in the sense of employers, to whom one is apprenticed
  - people who give specific feedback on one's performance
  - people with career experience willing to share their knowledge
- Supporters - people who give emotional and moral encouragement
- Sponsors - sources of information about, and aid in obtaining opportunities

The supporter aspect is one that is sometimes neglected or goes unconsidered by the supervisor. Todd Hoare notes that his workshop did not thoroughly delve into this aspect of supervision. The sponsor is also sometimes neglected, possibly because supervisors do not feel prepared to advise on career-related aspects.

There is no one form of effective mentorship, and this can differ by program, the nature of the research, and faculty member's style, student's needs, but there are themes that consistently come up as conducive to effective mentorship (Introduction, n.d ;Supervisory Styles, n.d).

What does Good Mentorship Look Like in Practice?

Generally, guiding students through their program, being aware of their needs and thus being able to help with problems they encounter. Outside of the program specific guidance, there should be guidance and support in terms of the students' future aspirations.

- Know your students (get to know them as individuals)
- Be aware of differences in ability, gender, minority, cultural aspects, or life circumstances of student
- Make expectations clear – (with the student) develop a work plan, including short and long-term goals and a timeline
- Provide individualized mentorship
  - E.g. be flexible in expectations (recognize that students are different, and some will require more help than others due to differences in independence, knowledge, project)
- Be proactive (take initiative in thinking about students and their needs before problems arise… ask questions e.g. funding, future career to prevent problems) and be open with student (discuss conflict honestly)
- Respect students as colleagues by promoting the sharing of ideas and experiences
  - Give students the room to try independent ideas (even on the side), devote resources (time and/or financial) to their own initiative (with feedback)
- Create room for intellectual growth and make standards clear through open, frequent, and regular communication
- Demystify the graduate experience (provide advice about process; policy, procedures, and also be willing to discuss challenges you faced as graduate student)
- Help students toward professional independence – encourage publication and presentation, teaching, introduce students to people in the field, encourage skill development
- Provide timely feedback that is constructive and supportive (including what they did well)
- Offer opportunities for students and faculty to get to know each other as people and as professionals

- Advocate for, promote, and nominate students
- Assist with finding other mentors (emeriti professors, professionals, etc.) for the student (mentoring is most effective when multiple people support a students' needs
    - Encourage peer mentoring (student-student)
- Be available (both individually and in group) and welcoming (create a comfortable environment where student can voice concerns)
- Be encouraging (research support, advice, and motivation)
- Be a role model; motivate students to become mentors
    - Even more than inspire – give them opportunities to be mentors and then reflect on how their experience as a mentor and a mentee could improve their performance in both cases.
- Know policies and resources concerning mental health and be compassionate concerning such issues

The above is modified from Queens (Supervising Graduate Students, n.d.), Oklahoma State University, Rackham (How to Mentor Grad Students: A Guide for Faculty, 2020) U of T (Section 2: Supervision and Mentoring, n.d; Section 3: Supervisory Styles, n.d.; McIntosh 2016), and UBC (Principles of Graduate Supervision, n.d.).

It is important to have a conversation and continue that conversation about what the student needs and expects from the supervisor and what the supervisor feels they can offer, what is reasonable (Rockquemore, n.d.).

When expectations are unclear between student and supervisor concerning supervision/mentorship style, the relationship can become unsatisfying (Section 3: Supervisory Styles, n.d.). Open lines of communication can help to prevent this. It is also important to be flexible in mentorship as what the student needs can change over the degree.

How to Develop Your Own Vision of Good Mentoring

In order to plan for successful mentoring, it can be useful to consider your time as a graduate student and answer the following questions:

- What kind of mentoring did I get?
- What was helpful and not helpful from the mentoring I received?
- Would that kind of mentoring apply well to present day graduate students?
- Did my mentors help me to progress and develop as an academic throughout my program?
- What new or different challenges exist in my field compared to when I was in graduate school?
- Did my mentors successfully prepare me for my career?
- What types of mentoring would have been useful to me?

The type of mentor you want to be can be identified using these questions and help to determine the basis of a constructive graduate-supervisor relationships (How to Mentor Grad Students: A Guide for Faculty, 2020; What a Mentor Does School, n.d).

Notes on Other Workshops and Information at Other Universities

Information on other workshops is not very detailed. Most universities with information on supervision or mentorship have it online, but any in-person workshops had limited detail available.

1. **University of Michigan's Rackham School of Graduate Studies "How to Mentor Graduate Students" is cited by many schools (Western, Queen's, U of Washington). Their information on what makes a good mentor is really inciteful. They also have a section on how graduate programs can encourage good mentoring, which aligns well with their list of good mentorship

https://rackham.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Fmentor.pdf

2. **U of T's School of Graduate Studies website has information for students and for faculty on supervision. This website is very comprehensive, with subsections such as "Creating Equality and Equity when Working with Students," and "When Problems Arise." U of T also states that there may be discipline specific differences due to the nature of certain programs.

https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/resources-supports/supervision-guidelines/supervision-guidelines-for-faculty-section-1-introduction/

3. Queen's has good information on what a mentor is, and mentoring strategies (from a webinar). It looks like they had a mentoring panel and these slides. Much of this is cited from Rackham.

https://www.queensu.ca/sgs/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.sgswww/files/files/Faculty-WorkshopsWebinars/FGS%20Mentoring.pdf

4. UBC has a "Principles of Graduate Supervision" doc (most interesting are their first principle of graduate supervision-that profs should have individualized supervisory approaches and their seventh principle-that reflection makes one a better supervisor). They also have a series of workshops on graduate supervision. Topics included for example, principles of excellent grad supervision.

https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/information-supervisors/principles-graduate-supervision

https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/information-supervisors/graduate-supervision-workshops

UBC also has this very thorough document.

https://gss.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Supervisory-Excellence-White-Paper.pdf

5. Waterloo offers a series of in-person workshops on graduate supervision, ranging from relevant policies at Waterloo to what they call the research supervision life cycle (with breakout session for differing disciplines)

https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/support-faculty-and-staff/support-new-faculty/graduate-supervision-series-faculty

6. Western has a guide to graduate supervision document and a supervision conversations series where profs have lunch and ask questions/share supervision strategies, and receive resources specific to a monthly theme.

https://teaching.uwo.ca/teaching/graduate-supervision.html

7. There is a nature article on mentoring, which again covers a lot of the same ideas as previously cited materials. It includes a test on 'how good of a mentor are you?'

https://grad.uw.edu/for-students-and-post-docs/core-programs/mentoring/mentoring-a-guide-for-faculty/what-a-mentor-does/

8. Canadian Association for Graduate studies has general principles for supervision

http://www.cags.ca/documents/publications/working/Guiding%20Principles%20for%20Graduate%20Student%20Supervision%20in%20Canada%20-%20rvsn7.pdf

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Appendix III

Primary Recommendation of the Working Group (2018-2019)

> ***The primary recommendation of this working group is to prioritize investment in up-front training and information for supervisors; promotion of documents that will help to implement important practices in building positive relationships; and connecting students with peer-networks that will serve to mitigate building tensions early through positive social activities and healthy discussions.***
>
> The committee heard from a number of consultants that investment in such "preventive" strategies, as the first steps, should prove to be more effective in managing the quality of the student/supervisor relations as compared to investment in strategies to mitigate deteriorating relationships. Ultimately, both processes will need to be addressed but the strategies below focus on promoting high quality relationships from the start.

Proposed Strategies

The strategies discussed below will require sustained effort and will need to be implemented for a substantial period of time in order to yield significant results. The committee has elected to focus on resources that will require minimal cost to implement and target both students and supervisors.

2. **The deployment of a survey to graduate students as well as faculty**. During the summer/fall of 2019, two surveys should be deployed to ensure the actions and recommendations of the committee are evidence based. These surveys will be conducted in collaboration with the office of Faculty Leadership and Development, the Coordinator for International Graduate Students, and the Coordinator, Recruitment, Retention and Diversity. SGS and the above-mentioned offices will resource these surveys, possibly using various student employment opportunities, which already exist on campus as well as exploring opportunities to leverage existing data or collaborations with the Office of Institutional Analysis. The purpose of these anonymized surveys will be to:
    a. See how many students self-identify as having experienced challenges with their supervisor
    b. See how many students perceive their colleagues as having experienced challenges with their supervisors
    c. Evaluate the awareness of students regarding the resources that are available on campus to help facilitate positive student/supervisor relationship building and maintenance.
    d. Assess the awareness of faculty regarding the resources that are available on campus to help facilitate positive student/supervisor relationship building and maintenance.
    e. Assess whether faculty and students have an opinion on what types of resources they feel would assist the development of a positive student/supervisor relationship.

f. Assess the willingness of faculty to utilize "Getting the Supervisory Relationship off to a Good Start"; a document which already exists at SGS (https://gs.mcmaster.ca/sites/default/files/resources/supervisory_relationshipjuly_222016.pdf)

3. **The development of an effective website that consolidates the available McMaster resources and lays out a stepwise path to deal with potential conflicts and their resolution.** The working group determined that Western University has a strong website dedicated to the management of student supervisor relationships. It may also be helpful to consider the preparation of a short e-document that can be distributed to all faculty through their individual departments. Some of the identified resources which should be included are:
    a. **The Ombuds' office** - The role of the Ombuds office will be clearly included on the website. We will ask the Ombudsperson for a description that summarizes the role of the office and provides appropriate contact information. By doing this, we risk the possibility that students may consider going directly and initially to the Ombuds office and overtax their resources. However, making this information available to faculty and students is important because of the possibility that majority of the university community may not clearly understand the role of this office in relationship management; a suggestion supported by the Ombudsman's office.
    b. The **student supervisor relationship management documents** (already in existence at SGS) should be recommended to all graduate students as tools to better explore their supervisor's expectations and their own expectations. The document entitled "Getting the Supervisory Relationship off to a Good Start" raises a number of important questions to discuss. These can form the foundation for performance expectations between the student/supervisor dyad. The link for the document is: https://gs.mcmaster.ca/sites/default/files/resources/supervisory_relationshipjuly_222016.pdf (also included as an appendix). It would be valuable if one or two departments utilized this document, as a pilot, to evaluate logistical hurdles and the extent of the impact it would have on reducing student supervisor conflicts. The committee agreed that it might be important to incentivize the use of this document. However, the mode through which this could be done was less clear. Initially, it could be implemented as a milestone in the progression of documents that a student must complete as part of their degree. This would at least ensure that the supervisor and student has had the important conversation.
    c. Included as part of this information, should also be a **link to the existing manual on Good Practice in the Supervision and Management of Postgraduate students** prepared by The McPherson Institute and Dr. Susan Watt. (https://mi.mcmaster.ca/site/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Supervision-Mentoring-of-Postgrad-Students-1.pdf). Importantly, this document outlines factors to consider in starting off the relationship and its suggestions fit well with the

implementation of the document described above. The Appendix sections of this document contains a number of valuable summaries that might be important references for individuals who have limited time. There is also a graduate supervision document on the SGS website which contains some concise information for both students and supervisors. Providing consolidated links to such documents from one easily referenced web page will be helpful for all parties. The working group recommends continuing to survey the landscape for documents that could become part of the consolidated set of resources for students and supervisors.

d. **A prioritized list of avenues to pursue when relationships begin to fail**. This would take the form of a grouping of resources to be investigated as a first step, as well as a second grouping of avenues to pursue in case initial efforts are not able to identify a suitable course of action. For example, some of the possible first steps include accessing the (i) supervisor (provided this is not where the source of stress originates); (ii) program representative or (iii) graduate student calendar or (iv) program handbook. The committee decided against specifying a single sequence of steps to follow recognizing that the spectrum of situations that students and faculty may be facing are likely to be too diverse to be accommodated into one logic-based flowsheet.
e. **How to connect to peer groups within each faculty**. ALL new graduate students should be encouraged to seek out a peer mentor at the start of their program. This inclusive strategy can be implemented by various graduate student association by holding informal social gatherings. Some faculties are already doing this.
f. **Student Wellness Centre** – a short description of the available contacts and resources will be consolidated from their website in consultation with the Wellness office.
g. **Equity & Inclusion Office** - A role and contact for this office should be included on the consolidated web page.
h. Information specifically targeted to the unique challenges faced by **International Graduate Students and Indigenous Graduate Students** should be specifically addressed as an item on the resource page. This may help to increase engagement by these students. Specific items that are of highest priority at the start of their graduate program will be identified in conversation with the School of Graduate Studies staff.

4. **Additional resources for consideration**
    a. Mitacs offers professional development workshops (project management, communication skills, etc); this type of training might be listed as resources under the broad conflict resolution umbrella – and more on the proactive/preventative side. These resources might help to flesh out skills/training that is either outside of the supervisor's scope/capacity
    b. MILO – for resources/information on intellectual property, ownership of work etc

c. Lynda.com – free online resources of leadership/professional behaviour that might be of interest to the graduate student population.

These tasks may be peripheral to the student supervisor relationship but the committee recognized that other supports, or consolidation of information on how to access these supports, can also be valuable to students in managing their levels of anxiety related to their academic progress.

5. **Faculty training in how to deal with student conflicts.**
    a. Development of clear documentation on **how to deal with deal with student appeals** and present these to the Associate/Assistant Deans of the various graduate programs on campus. Most graduate programs likely have these in place. It would be valuable to share these with faculty at new faculty training sessions and with our peer mentor leaders.
    b. Development of information concerning the **cultural differences in attitudes related to conflict and conflict management** for international students into the new faculty training programs. This can be placed into the faculty leadership module provided by the office of Faculty Leadership and Development.

6. **Peer mentorship strategies.** Some graduate student groups on campus have already implemented a coffee house get together for student/student conversations on faculty issues. Including faculty may help to provide a balanced discussion and some immediate answers, but this could stifle the discussion environment. Some strategies for successfully implementing the peer mentorship strategy include:
    a. **The need (from a student's perspective):** Often, students reach out to other students for representation, guidance and support when encountering concerns or issues regarding inadequate compensation, unrealistic expectations from their supervisor, or if they feel discriminated against.
    b. **Execution strategy:** Initially, student representatives aim to have conversations with the graduate student seeking assistance to assess the situation. As we begin to understand the needs for that student, we will also inquire whether other groups have been approached, such as the Associate Deans of their department, Ombuds, GSA, etc. Assuming we are one of the first groups they have reached out to, we can provide them with resources to assist them on a case-by-case basis, such as recommending they schedule a meeting with their Dean, book an appointment with Student Wellness, or make use of another health-based tools, etc. Our aim is to be primarily a sounding board (helping them to navigate the system), a party that is not directly involved in the conflict but can bring tools to the table for students that they might not have realized existed. Our secondary aim is to assist them in the appropriate capacity if they do not feel comfortable moving forward to meetings with other parties, due to a variety of reasons that may include uncertainty, shyness, fear, etc.

c. **Strategies to monitor the progress of students who require assistance:** Where appropriate, our representatives may be included in meetings/email conversations with other parties to continue to provide support to the student feeling there is a conflict. If in a particular case we simply direct students to resources, we may choose to reach out later and ensure they feel their needs are being met, or if they feel they need more resources, continue to assist in directing them to the help they require.
d. It may also be valuable to **collect statistics** on the frequency with which peer mentors are being contacted to help guide students in cases of conflict and whether the student felt the peer mentor relationship was beneficial. The need for statistics should be balanced with the consideration of possibly overburdening students who want to be helpful; otherwise this may have a detrimental effect to the overall program.

7. **Dialogue through social media.** The possibility of using social media to create a campaign that would keep resources, processes, and supports in the awareness of students. SGS has a weekly email to all graduate students, and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram could be utilized to communicate the various resources to the student body on a frequent basis. Graduate students do not need the service/support/resources until "they need it". In other words, timing is key, and pacing these messages (also tips for good communication, stress-reduction, and campus resources) on effective intervals could help to mitigate issues before and as they come up. The SGS communications coordinator is effective at managing negativity on social media. While this is not meant to be an in-depth discussion forum, it would be advisable to have skilled social worker or a trained counselor to facilitate this process. The implementation of this offering may need to await appropriate resourcing.

8. **Update of SGS 101 to include information about how to effectively manage student supervisor relationships.** It may be valuable to integrate a student development plan into SGS 101 so students can come back to visit the core principles and resources as needed. It may be possible to house this student plan in Avenue so that the students can revisit it during the progression of their academic career at McMaster. The student supervisor form can be included as part of the landmarks that assist students in monitoring the quality of their professional relationship with their supervisor.

9. **Providing students with the option of getting training in professional communication through continuing education.** The committee explored the possible engagement of McMaster Continuing Education and the McPherson Institute in delivering specialized workshops/courses to students related to professional conduct, conflict management. While MCE has programs in leadership and professional conduct, their courses are free to McMaster staff and not graduate students. The cost of courses range from $300-900/ student (depending on the length of the course). This may not be pragmatic solution given the size of the graduate student body. MCE can develop specialized courses that would also necessitate a heavy up-front cost. The courses do

become cheaper per student as more students engage. Some of the courses that are possible through this program include (i) Difficult Conversations (ii) Conflict Resolution (iii) Work Life Balance, and (iv) Effective Business communications. While these are valuable courses, the committee did not feel that were was sufficient return on investment in moving forward with these courses, even for the peer mentor leaders given their cost.

The McPherson Institute was approached to provide similar types of supports. They advocated for establishment of a positive relationship from the start of the degree program, using tools such as the student/supervisor document discussed above. The possibility of modifying this document (if such modifications are required) with the assistance of McPherson is also a possibility.

While the possibility of the McPherson Institute providing some training in professional conduct or conflict management for the Student Peer group leaders was discussed, this was deemed to be resource intensive because of the expertise that would be required to provide such training and the time commitment that would be required by the graduate student leaders to absorb the training effectively. In general, the advice from all consultants regarding how to manage deteriorating student/supervisor relationships effectively, was that there is a significantly better return on investment if resources are provided to build a strong relationship from the start, rather than manage a deteriorating relationship.

10. **Continued investment in the working group on Student Supervisor Relationships.** The working group recognized that developing quality student/supervisor relationships is a dynamic challenge due to the changing academic and employment environment. The committee recommends that SGS continue to invest effort in monitoring and updating solutions to these issues through the continued efforts of a Graduate Council working group.