

## **FINDING AND MANAGING YOUR RESEARCH SUPERVISOR & COMMITTEE**

**EDST Graduate Advising Workshop  
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In the Department of EDST, students come with diverse backgrounds and interests. Given this diversity, it is impossible to look for a perfect match between students' research topics and supervisors and committees. When looking for a supervisor and for committee members, work on creating a team of faculty members each of whom brings some area of expertise and knowledge that can contribute to your learning.

### **HOW DO I GET A RESEARCH SUPERVISOR/COMMITTEE?**

- Approach finding a research supervisor and committee much like you would a research project, that is, regard it as a process of clarifying your topic or questions, deciding on the ways you'll gather data (quantitative and qualitative) and interpreting it.
- This process requires skills, knowledge and a particular set of attitudes or beliefs.
- Take care in undertaking this project.
- Find faculty who are knowledgeable, who can guide you, who work well together, who are accessible, who will be direct with you.
- It is better to have the hard and critical questions coming from your committee during the process than having them come as a surprise from your external examiner.

### **SKILLS & DISPOSITIONS:**

👉 knowing and asking for what you want   👉 data collection

### **KNOWLEDGE/INFORMATION:**

👉 Become familiar with the policies of Faculty of Graduate Studies (FoGs) and of the department regarding supervisors and committee members. Review these policies on these websites: FOGS: [www.grad.ubc.ca](http://www.grad.ubc.ca) and EDST: [www.edst.educa.ubc.ca](http://www.edst.educa.ubc.ca)

👉 begin to clarify your research interests, know your personality & style & preferences regarding feedback and communication.

### **ATTITUDE:**

👉 Be proactive & self-directed, 👉 Be curious, flexible, positive (some trust that the system will work for you)   👉 Have some empathy (some sense of the view from the

faculty side)

### **GATHERING INFORMATION ON FACULTY**

- ✓ Description of faculty, their research interests, courses taught and projects: both your own department, other departments/programs in education and other faculties at use (check department websites & the research directory available through the OGPR website: <http://educ.ubc/ogpr>)
- ✓ Take classes from different faculty members (within and outside of department and faculty)
- ✓ Talk to other faculty and students
- ✓ Go to seminars, events within department and outside of department
- ✓ Attend conferences

### **STEPS TO TAKE:**

🕒 **Begin to clarify your research interests/topic** - be as clear as you can about your interests and your methodological approach (write something down)

🕒 **Meet with faculty member** - if they don't know you well, send them your research description, clarify how much time you'll need

🕒 **Take notes** - when meeting with potential supervisor, take notes, if the faculty member cannot be your supervisor, ask who they could recommend you talk to

🕒 **Clarify expectations** – think through what you expect from a supervisor/committee member, make a list (look at the list of responsibilities of graduate students on the FOGS website. Ask faculty member what their expectations are, how they work with students, how often they like to meet, when they might be away on study leave or at conferences, best way to communicate

🕒 **Reciprocity** - think of the relationship as mutually beneficial, you want something, but so do faculty

🕒 **Other committee members** – once you have a supervisor, work with them too identify potential committee members, clarify how these faculty members will be approached (sometimes the student talks to the faculty member, sometimes the faculty member makes the initial contact)

## **SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- to assist student in selection/planning of a suitable/manageable research topic
- to have sufficient familiarity with field in order to provide guidance
- if not familiar, be willing to gain knowledge before agreeing to act as supervisor
- to be accessible to consultation/discussions with student
- to establish a supervisory committee, convene committee meeting at least annually
- to respond in timely manner to written work with constructive suggestions (turn around should not exceed 3weeks)
- to make arrangements to ensure continuity when supervisor is absent or extended periods (more than 1 m.)
- to make reasonable arrangements to ensure research resources needed for thesis project are available
- to assist student in gaining access to facilities/research materials
- to help ensure research environment is safe, healthy and free of harassment, discrimination & conflict
- to endeavor to achieve consensus when conflicts or differences emerge among committee members
- to ensure that student is aware of program requirements, deadlines, funding sources
- to encourage student to make presentations of research results within University & at scholarly and professional meetings
- to help student plan the work, set a schedule
- to acknowledge appropriately the contributions of the student in presentations & published material, often through joint authorship
- to ensure that arrangements for oral examinations are made in timely manner
- to assist student in making changes needed following oral examination

## **STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

- to make a commitment & show dedicated efforts to gain background knowledge and skills needed to pursue research project successfully
- to develop, with supervisor, a plan and timetable for completion of all stages
- to work assiduously to adhere to schedule & deadlines
- to meet with supervisor when requested, to report fully & regularly on progress
- to maintain registration throughout program, ensure student visas and employment authorization documents are up to date
- to give serious consideration & respond to advice/criticisms from supervisor & other committee members
- to pay due attention to maintaining a tidy, safe & health
- workplace where individual shows tolerance & respect for rights of others
- to be thoughtful and reasonably frugal in using resources provided by supervisor & University
- to assist, when applicable, in obtaining additional resources for one's own research and for other group members

- to conform to University, Faculty and program requirements
- to recognize the teaching, research and service obligations of supervisor/committee that may preclude immediate responses
- to recognize the responsibility for utilization of data when student's research is a component of supervisor's research program (to submit draft paper and raw data to supervisor prior to submission for publication)
- to meet agreed performance standards & deadlines of funding organizations
- to conform to the strictest standards of honesty to ensure academic integrity and professionalism, particularly acknowledging assistance, materials and data provided by others
- to terminate work and clean up work space when program requirements have been met
- to return borrowed material to supervisor, department, library, reading room etc.