



## Policy Title: Supervisor and Supervisory Committee (PhD)

Effective Date: 2024-04-02  
Next Review Date: 2029-09-01

Parent Policy	None
Policy Administrator	Associate Provost, Research & Graduate Studies
Approving Body	Senate
Approval History	2024-04-02; Senate Motion #2023/24 – 026

### Purpose:

The objectives of this policy are to clarify the composition, qualifications, roles, and responsibilities of a PhD student's supervisor and supervisory committee.

### Scope of this Policy:

Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) PhD students

### Policy Statement:

Every student in a dissertation-based PhD program must have a supervisor and a supervisory committee. The supervisor will provide commitment, accessibility, professionalism, guidance, respect, and consistent encouragement to the student. The committee should be established as early in the student's program as possible.

A supervisor is assigned by mutual agreement between the student, director, and supervisor within the first 12 months of the student's program. The principal role of the supervisor is to help the student achieve their scholarly potential, and to chair the student's supervisory committee. Supervision is a valued aspect of teaching and considered in the allocation of workload.

### Supervisory Roles & Responsibilities, and Eligibility

**Supervisor Roles and Responsibilities:** The supervisor will provide reasonable commitment, accessibility, professionalism, stimulation, guidance, respect, and consistent encouragement to the student. Supervisors should be available to help their graduate students at every stage, from formulation of their research projects through establishing methodologies and discussing results, to presentation and possible publication of dissertations. Supervisors must also ensure that their students' work meets the standards of the University and the academic discipline.

**Supervisor Qualifications:** tenure-track or tenured academic faculty or ranked contract academic faculty who have research as part of their duties. Supervisors should have competence in the student's proposed area of research or their methodology. If the supervisor retires or is re-assigned from the

University, they can no longer act as sole supervisor, but may continue as co-supervisor, with the consent of the Office of Graduate Studies.

**Supervisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities:** It is the responsibility of the Supervisory Committee to provide constructive criticism and assessment of the student's ideas as the program develops, thereby broadening and deepening the range of expertise and experience of the graduate student. The Committee is required to approve the final dissertation before examination.

The Supervisory Committee must meet at least twice a year to monitor and direct the student's progress. Generally, it is the student's responsibility to organize the Committee meetings.

**Supervisory Committee Composition:** The Supervisory Committee is structured by Month 20 in the program, consisting of a Supervisor and two Committee members (or 2 co-supervisors and a Committee member). The Committee is structured in consultation between the student, supervisor, and program director with final approval by the Office of Graduate Studies. Typically, one member is a substantive expert and another member a methodology expert. It is recommended that at least one Committee member be from a department or a university other than the student's. Interdisciplinary representation (e.g., educational leadership, philosophy) is encouraged, and may involve a qualified faculty member from another department or institution as the third member. A fourth Committee member may be appointed, with clear rationale. Under certain circumstances, substitution of committee members may be required but the qualifications/constitution of committee as specified in this policy must be retained.

**Supervisory Committee Qualifications:** To be considered a qualified committee member, faculty have credentials and record of scholarship (publications, research) in the areas of the student's proposed research or methodology. Supervisory committee members are to be available for help at every stage of the student's program, from course selection to comprehensive examination to formulation of the research proposal by establishing the methodology and discussing the results, to presentation and publication of the dissertation.

**Student Roles and Responsibilities:** By entering a PhD program, the student has made a commitment to devoting the time and energy necessary to engage in research and writing a dissertation which constitutes a substantial and original contribution to knowledge in a field. The supervisor has a right to expect from the student ability, initiative, and receptivity to feedback. The student conforms to the highest principles of ethics, academic integrity, and professionalism.

#### **Definitions:**

**Supervisor:** The primary academic mentor to the PhD student in the supervisory relationship.

**Co-Supervision:** Joint primary academic mentorship of the PhD student by two supervisors.

**Supervisory Committee:** A committee of TWU's faculty or appointed members who assist the supervisor in providing guidance, consultation, and advice on the PhD student's candidacy examination and dissertation. Supervisory Committee Members are from the PhD student's home department but can also be faculty members in other Faculties/Schools/Departments or approved appointed members external to Trinity Western University.

**Procedures:** Please see Procedures for A 2-25 Supervisor and Supervisory Committee (PhD)

**Child Policies:** None

**Other Related Policies:** PhD Candidacy Examination (Proposal Defence); PhD Comprehensive Examination