



Series: Academic / Courses,  
Curriculum, Exams (A 2)  
Number: A 2-33  
  
Effective Date: 2026-02-03  
Next Review Date: 2029-09-01

**Policy Title: Graduate Student Research Supervision**

<b>Parent Policy</b>	None
<b>Policy Administrator</b>	Associate Provost, Research & Graduate Studies
<b>Approving Body</b>	Senate
<b>Approval History</b>	2026-02-03; Senate Motion #2025/26 – 028

**Preamble:**

High quality academic supervision that results in productive, constructive, and supportive supervisory relationships is a foundation of a thriving university graduate research culture where students are supported to make meaningful contributions to their field of specialization when pursuing their graduate degrees in graduate programs that contain a major research component where students produce a final graduate student research project work product (as defined below). The graduate student research project work product undergoes a final evaluation (such as a thesis/dissertation defence) as a requirement for completion of the program.

**Purpose:**

The objective of this policy is to outline the roles and responsibilities of graduate students, supervisors, supervisory committees, graduate programs, program directors, and the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) regarding academic supervision of students for graduate studies.

**Scope of this Policy:**

Graduate programs with a major research component that requires a graduate student to work on a research project where the final graduate student research project work product that undergoes a final evaluation (such as a thesis/dissertation defence) as a requirement for completion of the program. The policy applies to the program directors, faculty, graduate students, supervisors in these programs as well as supervisory committees and the OGS at TWU.

**Policy Statement:**

This policy endorses the following principles for graduate supervision: student-focused, respectful, open, transparent, and frequent communication, progress monitoring, accountability, responsive and timely feedback. In addition, this policy endorses the use of existing TWU resources/supports for aiding the student experience such as but not limited to the Wellness Centre, Student Life, the Office of the Office of the University Siyá:m, the Office of Inclusive Excellence, TWU Learning Commons, the Centre for Accessible Learning.

## 1. Graduate Supervisor Responsibilities

The role of the graduate supervisor (referred to as both graduate supervisor and supervisor within this policy) is to serve as the primary academic mentor to the graduate student and provide oversight on their progress and research. By agreeing to work with a graduate student, the graduate supervisor will foster the intellectual and professional growth of their graduate students so that the graduate student can become competent contributors to their academic field of specialization.

Graduate supervisor and graduate co-supervisor responsibilities:

- a) Participate in graduate supervision orientation and training offered by OGS, normally within one year of appointment to the University and update training every 5 years.
- b) Be familiar with and follow the policies related to supervision and graduate studies as outlined in the graduate program and the OGS policies and thesis handbooks.
- c) To assist the student in forming and, when appropriate, revising a supervisory committee and, in consultation with the student, to call meetings of the supervisory committee on a regular basis and whenever issues relating to student progress need to be addressed. The supervisor shall normally chair meetings of the committee and, if necessary, arbitrate decisions of the committee.
- d) In the case of PhD/doctoral graduate students, work within graduate program's candidacy/comprehensive structure on initiating the steps required to conduct the graduate student's comprehensive/candidacy examination(s).
- e) Encourage and support intellectual debate with the graduate student.
- f) Discuss with the graduate student:
  - i. Graduate program and OGS policies/procedures
  - ii. Learning and research goals of the research project that will lead to the graduate student research project work product.
  - iii. Supporting revision of the research goals as needed along with resources/supports available to achieve research goals.
  - iv. Mutually agreeable communication approach that will work for both parties including frequency and form of communication, including expectations for supervisory meetings.
  - v. Goals for conference attendance, publishing, research, teaching, other employment opportunities, and engagement in academic community activities, encouraging the graduate student (when applicable) to disseminate research findings through publication, presentation, or creation of artistic or other works.
  - vi. Human research ethics approval requirements, ownership of intellectual property and authorship on publications (and, where appropriate, establish in writing), following TWU policy including the R1-06 Intellectual Property Policy (linked below).
- g) Respond to graduate student's submitted or presented work with timely constructive and actionable feedback to support/ensure continuous progress.
- h) Monitor the graduate student's progress as required by OGS and as applicable within the student's graduate program through annual progress monitoring, and regular communication with the graduate student.

- i) Encourage and support the graduate student in any reasonable internal or external funding applications and particularly those sanctioned by the University (e.g., tri-council funding).
- j) In collaboration with the graduate student, facilitate the establishment of a supervisory committee (when required) and facilitate program milestones (e.g., coursework selection, candidacy/comprehensive examination, thesis/dissertation defense, capstone project work product evaluation).
- k) Work to negotiate differences of opinion; when conflicts or differences in expectations arise, seek department, faculty, program director or OGS to support to resolve conflicts.
- l) If a graduate student expresses distress, direct them to the TWU Wellness Center, other units within Student Life; Campus Security and Emergency Services, or other TWU resources as appropriate.
- m) In the event that a graduate student makes a disclosure of sexual violence, adhere to requirements as detailed in the SCE 2-04 Sexualized Violence Policy (linked below).
- n) In coordination with the graduate program/academic unit, and TWU Centre for Accessible Learning, ensure graduate students receive appropriate academic considerations for extenuating circumstances and/or disability-related accommodations.
- o) Maintain an academic and professional graduate student-supervisor relationship that adheres to all applicable TWU policies and procedures including but not limited to the AD 1-01 Conflict of Interest policy, R 1-04 Conflict of Interest in Research, SCE 2-01 Bullying and Harassment and SCE 2-04 Sexualized Violence Policy (all linked below).

## 2. Graduate Student Responsibilities

The role of the graduate student is to focus on learning and research to complete their academic requirements including their dissertation, thesis, or major research output within the expected time frame in accordance with their graduate program. By agreeing to work with a supervisor, a graduate student enters an academic partnership that will support the graduate student's academic development and contributions to their field of specialization.

Graduate student responsibilities:

- a) Be familiar with the policies, procedures and regulations of the graduate program, the OGS and TWU and ensure all required training is obtained as applicable (e.g. research ethics, safety etc.).
- b) Access resources and training offered by the OGS to gain an understanding of best practices for engaging in a graduate student-supervisor partnership as early as possible.
- c) Adhere to the [Student Code of Conduct](#).
- d) Conduct research with the highest standard of ethical and research practice; adhere to R 1-05 Integrity in Scholarship and Research, and Tri-Council policies on research integrity including but not limited to the [Tri-agency Framework for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#).
- e) Maintain an academic and professional graduate student-supervisor relationship that abides by AD 1-01 Conflict of Interest policy, SCE 2-01 Bullying and Harassment and SCE 2-04 Sexualized Violence Policy (all linked below).
- f) To seek advice on matters related to their program, progress, academic standing, or potential conflicts of interest. Students may meet in confidence (together with an advocate of their choice,

if desired) with their supervisor, members of the supervisory committee, the program director, head of department/dean, Associate Provost, Research and Graduate Studies without fear of reprisal.

- g) Understand the SCE 3-01 Accessible Learning policy (linked below) and consult with the TWU Centre for Accessible Learning if an accommodation(s) is sought in connection with a disability and discuss all accommodation needs with your supervisor and graduate program chair.
- h) Work with your supervisor and supervisory committee to complete annual progress reports as required by OGS.
- i) To maintain registration throughout the program and (for international students) to ensure that student visas and (where applicable) employment authorization documents are kept up to date.
- j) The graduate student should discuss the following with their Supervisor
  - i. Graduate program procedures and standards for coursework, candidacy/comprehensive examinations (if applicable), proposals (if applicable), thesis/dissertation research (if applicable), thesis/dissertation defense (if applicable) or final evaluation of capstone project work products.
  - ii. A mutually agreeable communication approach that will work for the graduate student and supervisor including frequency and form of communication and expectations for supervisory meetings.
  - iii. Goals for conference attendance, publishing, research, teaching, other employment opportunities, and engagement in academic community activities.
  - iv. Learning and research goals and develop a concrete plan to achieve these goals.
  - v. Funding opportunities and apply for internal and external competitions that are mutually deemed beneficial and appropriate.
  - vi. Periods that the graduate student will be unavailable including vacation time to ensure there is minimal disruption to academic progress.
- k) The Graduate student should discuss the following with their supervisor and supervisory committee:
  - i. A research plan and timeline for progress monitoring, meetings, and sharing of work.
  - ii. Response to constructive feedback in a timely manner.
  - iii. Human research ethics approval requirements, ownership of intellectual property and authorship on publications (when possible establish in writing) following TWU policies.
  - iv. Promptly discuss changes in circumstances that could affect performance or progress; give serious consideration to the advice and constructive feedback offered by your supervisor and/or supervisory committee. Seek advice from other department/faculty, or TWU administration or resources as needed.

### **3. Responsibilities of Supervisory Committee Members**

The primary role of the supervisory committee is to broaden and deepen the graduate student's experience and range of expertise. The supervisory committee assists the supervisor in providing guidance, consultation, and advice on the graduate student research project work product.

Responsibilities of Supervisory Committee Members:

- a) Be familiar with and follow the policies and procedures related to supervision and graduate studies as outlined by the graduate program and Office of Graduate Studies.
- b) Monitor the graduate student's progress in conjunction with the supervisor by assessing and providing feedback on the graduate student's submitted or presented work (e.g., proposal/presentation on progress/progress reports).
- c) Respond with constructive and timely feedback to work submitted by the graduate student to support continuous improvement following student's program/departmental expectations and as agreed upon between student and supervisor.
- d) Discuss with the graduate student (and where appropriate establish in writing) ownership of intellectual property, authorship on publications and human research ethics approval requirements following TWU policies.
- e) If a graduate student expresses distress, direct them to the TWU Wellness Center, other units within Student Life; Campus Security and Emergency Services, or other TWU resources as appropriate.
- f) In the event that a graduate student makes a disclosure of sexual violence, adhere to requirements as detailed in SCE 2-04 Sexualized Violence policy (linked below).

#### **4. Responsibilities of Graduate Programs regarding Graduate Student supervision**

The role of the graduate program director, Faculty of Graduate Studies faculty, and academic units (Faculties/Schools) in graduate student supervision is to create a supportive, welcoming, and inclusive learning environment to facilitate effective supervision and graduate student learning.

The primary responsibilities of the graduate program director are to:

- a) Be familiar with and support current policies and procedures related to supervision and graduate studies as outlined by the graduate program and OGS, including the sequence of program components and supervisory requirements.
- b) Inform and orient new and continuing graduate students of graduate program expectations, policies, funding (where relevant), and requirements including supervision process and procedures.
- c) Annually monitor progress of graduate students in conjunction with graduate students' supervisors by accepting reports from the program director/supervisor.
- d) With support of the academic unit (Faculty or School), ensure that arrangements are made for an alternate supervisor if the regular supervisor either departs, is absent for an indefinite period, or when a conflict of interest cannot be resolved to the point of dissolution of the supervisory relationship.
- e) With support of the academic unit (Faculty or School), ensure that arrangements are made for an interim supervisor should the regular supervisor be on leave (e.g., parental, academic, medical).
- f) Arrange for or facilitate consultation and mediation when a conflict arises within the supervisory relationship, referring to the OGS as necessary.
- g) In coordination with the supervisor and the TWU Centre for Accessible Learning ensure graduate students receive appropriate academic considerations for extenuating circumstances and/or disability-related accommodations.

- h) If a graduate student expresses distress, direct them to the TWU Wellness Center, other units within Student Life; Campus Security and Emergency Services, or other TWU resources as appropriate.
- i) In the event that a graduate student makes a disclosure of sexual violence, adhere to requirements as detailed in SCE 2-04 Sexualized Violence policy (linked below).

## **5. Responsibilities of the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) regarding Graduate Student supervision**

The role of the OGS in graduate student supervision is to ensure systemic policies that facilitate effective and positive graduate supervision are in place. The OGS will work closely with graduate students, departments, Schools and Faculties and other partners both within and outside the University to promote excellence and foster an enriched and collegial environment for the pursuit of graduate education.

The responsibilities of the OGS include:

- a) Ensure policies and resources are available to support graduate supervision across Schools and Faculties and develop new policies and resources as conditions in graduate education evolve.
- b) Provide support and training for new and continuing faculty on graduate supervision.
- c) Annually monitor graduate student program progress via receiving reports from graduate programs and consider requests for extension, changes in study status, and other extenuating circumstances.
- d) In coordination with the graduate program/academic unit, graduate student and TWU Centre for Accessible Learning ensure graduate students receive appropriate academic considerations for extenuating circumstances and/or disability-related accommodations.
- e) Request students and supervisors to complete evaluations to assess the effectiveness of supervisory relationships at TWU and to guide subsequent training of supervisors and students.
- f) If a graduate student expresses distress, direct them to the TWU Wellness Center, other units within Student Life; Campus Security and Emergency Services, or other TWU resources as appropriate.
- g) In the event that a Graduate Student makes a disclosure of sexual violence, adhere to requirements as detailed in SCE 2-04 Sexualized Violence policy (linked below).
- h) To meet on a confidential basis with any student at any point in their studies, or the supervisor of a student in any point in their studies, to discuss academic concerns. Consultation will normally begin with a graduate program director who, if the student concern has an academic basis, will advise the student directly and will otherwise direct the student to the appropriate campus resource or authority.

## **6. Non-compliance with this policy**

- a) **Non-compliance with this policy by a student:** Student compliance is managed at the unit level, starting with the supervisor and supervisory committee, and involving the Program Director and Head of Department/Dean of the academic unit if it is alleged that the student continues to display noncompliance. Members of the academic unit may seek the advice of the Associate Provost Research and Graduate Studies at any time.

**b) Non-compliance of this policy by a Supervisor or members of the Supervisory Committee**

- i. In the case of alleged non-compliance with these supervisory guidelines by a supervisor or supervisory committee member, the Associate Provost Research and Graduate Studies has the responsibilities:
  - a. To request a written report from the person making the allegation.
  - b. To review the written report of non-compliance.
  - c. To provide an opportunity for a consultative process with the parties involved.
  - d. Where, in the opinion of the Associate Provost, Research and Graduate Studies, a report of non-compliance provides evidence of “misconduct” as that term is defined in R 1-05 Integrity in Scholarship and Research policy, the Associate Provost, Research and Graduate Studies may make a complaint under R 1-05 Integrity in Scholarship and Research policy and the report shall thereafter be dealt with in accordance with that Policy (linked below).
  - e. Where, in the opinion of the Associate Provost, Research and Graduate Studies, a report of non-compliance does not provide evidence of “misconduct” as that term is defined in R 1-05 Integrity in Scholarship and Research policy or does not warrant invoking the R 1-05 Integrity in Scholarship and Research policy, the Associate Provost, Research and Graduate Studies shall forward a copy of the report to the graduate student’s supervisor and the members of the graduate student’s supervisory committee with an invitation to send response to the Associate Provost, Research and Graduate Studies. The Associate Provost, Research and Graduate Studies may also, when appropriate, forward a copy of the report to the graduate student.
  - f. After reviewing any responses to the report mentioned above, the Associate Provost, Research and Graduate Studies may choose one or more of the options below:
    - 1) Where the Associate Provost, Research and Graduate Studies determines that the matter can be satisfactorily resolved with a written decision, the Associate Provost, Research and Graduate Studies shall send a letter to the person who made the report and all persons to whom a copy of the report was sent.
    - 2) Where the Associate Provost, Research and Graduate Studies determines that the matter requires intervention, meet with the person who made the report, the student’s academic supervisor, and the student’s supervisory committee, either together or separately, to discuss the report and the responses to the report in order:
      - a. To seek a resolution of any conflicts among the parties.
      - b. To discuss methods of compliance in the future.
      - c. To propose education and remedial strategies for particular parties. This may include assigning a member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies to act as a mentor or co-supervisor for the parties, as appropriate.
      - d. Initiate procedures under appropriate articles of the Collective Agreement.

## 7. Leaves by Graduate Student, Supervisor or Supervisory Committee members

A supervisor, committee member, or graduate student may take leave from their primary responsibilities as outlined above over the duration of a graduate student's graduate program.

If a supervisor takes leave, depending on the duration and nature of the leave, the supervisor will, in coordination with the program director, communicate with the graduate student their intentions to either (a) continue to offer supervision, or (b) propose that an interim (or when appropriate an alternate) supervisor be appointed. In the latter case, the program director may arrange for an interim or alternate supervisor or may themselves serve as the interim or alternate supervisor. Members of the supervisory committee may also be called upon to take a more active role in cases where supervisors are absent for extended periods of time.

If a supervisory committee member takes leave, the committee member will, in consultation with the program director, as applicable, discuss with the graduate student and supervisor their intentions to either (a) continue to offer supervisory committee support, or (b) propose that an alternate committee member be appointed. In the latter case, the supervisor and graduate student will discuss and select an alternate committee member with subsequent approval from the Office of Graduate Studies as outlined in A 2-29 Thesis Supervisory Committee (Masters) and A 2-24 Supervisor and Supervisory Committee (PhD/Doctoral) policies (linked below).

Graduate students may take leaves according to the A 2-13 Graduate Studies Leave of Absence policy (linked below).

### Definitions:

**Alternate Supervisor:** Appointed in cases where the primary supervisor is no longer able to act in their supervisory capacity. The primary academic mentor to the graduate student in the supervisory relationship. Normally, the alternate supervisor must be a University faculty member and member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and member of the student's academic unit (School or Faculty).

**Capstone Project:** An autonomous research project guided by a supervisor that is focused on practical application with the goal of demonstrating a graduate student's mastery of knowledge and skills acquired in their program of study for completion of a degree.

**Capstone Project Work Product:** A major research product (such as but not limited to a paper, scholarly publication, performance, recital, or exhibit) that results from a Capstone project. Capstone project work products undergo a final evaluation as a requirement for program completion.

**Collective Agreement:** Agreement between Trinity Western University and Educate BC, CLAC Local 62.

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

**Graduate Program:** Academic programs of study at the graduate level.

**Graduate Program Director:** The main point of contact for each graduate program at TWU.

**Graduate Student:** A student registered in a graduate program at TWU.

**Graduate Student Research Project Work Product:** A dissertation, thesis, or capstone project work product.

**Interim Supervisor:** Appointed in cases where the primary supervisor is temporarily unable to act in their supervisory capacity. Serves as the primary academic mentor to the graduate student in the supervisory relationship on an interim basis. Normally, the interim supervisor must be a University faculty member and member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and member of the student's home academic unit (School or Faculty).

**Office of Graduate Studies:** The office under the Office of the Provost that oversees graduate programs within the University, or the physical office of this body.

**Supervisor:** The primary academic mentor to the graduate student in the supervisory relationship. Normally, the supervisor must be a University faculty member and member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and member of the student's academic unit (School or Faculty).

**Supervisory Committee:** A committee of TWU faculty or appointed members who assist the supervisor in providing guidance, consultation, and advice on the graduate student's comprehensive/candidacy examination (or equivalent), dissertation, thesis, or capstone project work product. Normally, supervisory committee members are from the graduate student's academic unit (School or Faculty) but may also be faculty members in other academic units with membership in Faculty of Graduate Studies or may include approved appointed members outside TWU.

**University:** Refers to Trinity Western University (TWU)

**Procedures:** None

**Child Policies:** None

**Other Related Policies:** A 2-13 Graduate Studies Leave of Absence

A 2-24 Supervisor and Supervisory Committee (PhD/doctoral)

A 2-29 Thesis Supervisory Committee (Masters)

AD 1-01 Conflict of Interest

R 1-04 Conflict of Interest in Research [and Scholarship](#)

R 1-05 Integrity in Scholarship and Research

SCE 2-01 Bullying and Harassment

SCE 2-04 Sexualized Violence

SCE 3-01 Accessibility Policy